THE MAGAZINE OF

Fantasy AND Science Fiction

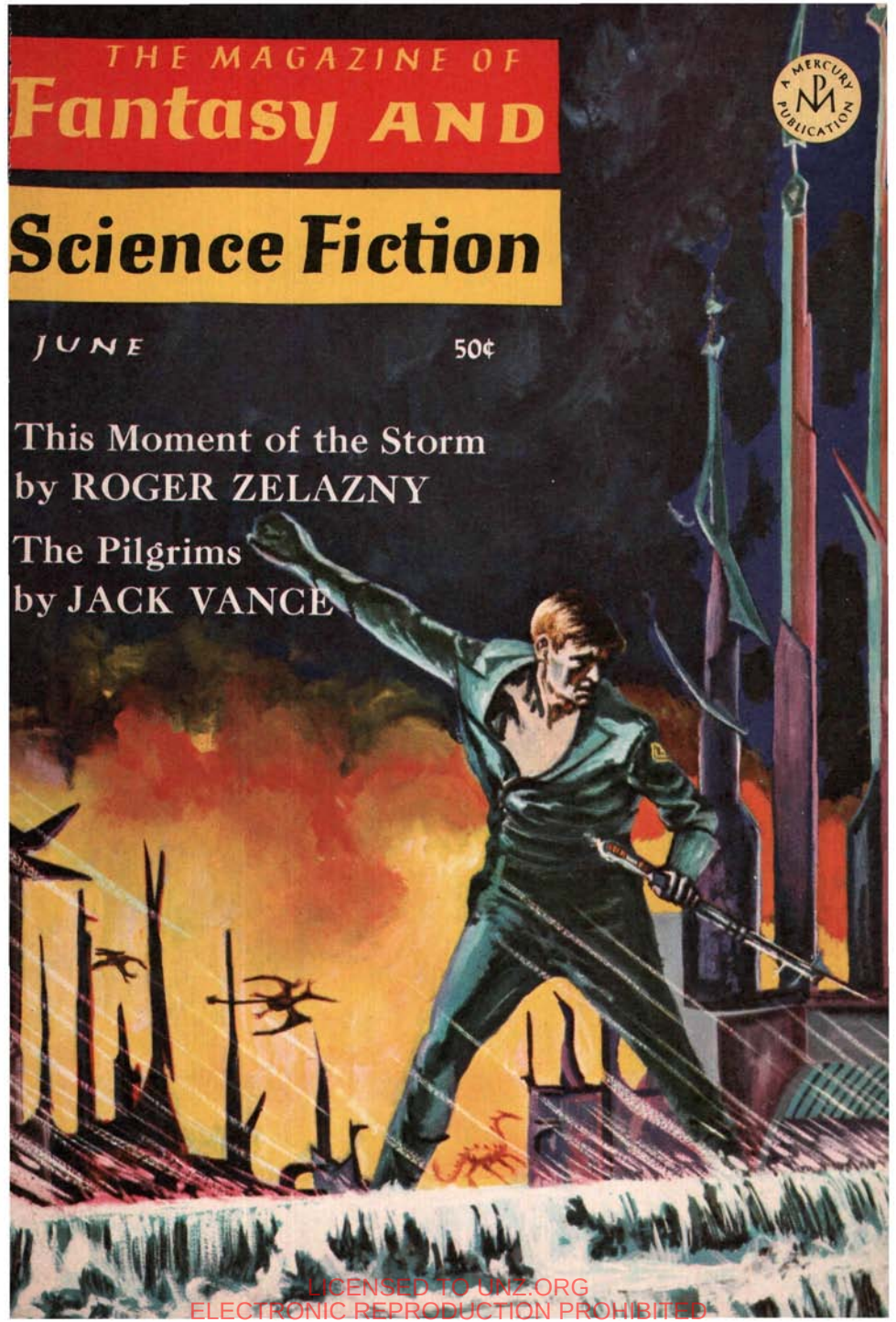
A MERCURY PUBLICATION

JUNE

50¢

This Moment of the Storm
by ROGER ZELAZNY

The Pilgrims
by JACK VANCE



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

295
8F

Fantasy and Science Fiction

JUNE

Including Venture Science Fiction

NOVELETTES

This Moment of the Storm — ROGER ZELAZNY — 4
The Pilgrims — JACK VANCE — 96

SHORT STORIES

The Little Blue Weeds of Spring — DORIS PITKIN BUCK — 41
Care in Captivity Series: Tyrannosaurus Rex — BARRY ROTHMAN — 53
The Adjusted — KENNETH BULMER — 55
A Quest For Uplift — LEN GUTTRIDGE — 65
Forgive Us Our Debtors — JON DECLES — 76

FEATURES

Cartoon — GAHAN WILSON — 31
Books — JUDITH MERRIL and FRITZ LEIBER — 32
Migratory Locusts — THEODORE L. THOMAS — 63
Memo to Secretary (*verse*) — PAT DE GRAW — 64
Science: The Isles of Earth — ISAAC ASIMOV — 84
F&SF Marketplace — 128
Index to Volume XXX — 130

Cover by H. Castellon (illustrating "This Moment of the Storm")

Joseph W. Ferman, PUBLISHER — *Edward L. Ferman*, EDITOR
Ted White, ASSISTANT EDITOR — *Isaac Asimov*, SCIENCE EDITOR
Judith Merril, BOOK EDITOR — *Robert P. Mills*, CONSULTING EDITOR
Dale Beardale, CIRCULATION MANAGER

The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction, Volume 30, No. 6, Whole No. 181, June 1966. Published monthly by Mercury Press, Inc., at 50¢ a copy. Annual subscription $5.00; $5.50 in Canada and the Pan American Union, $6.00 in all other countries. Publication office, 10 Ferry Street, Concord, N. H. 03302. Editorial and general mail should be sent to 347 East 53rd St., New York, N. Y. 10022. Second Class postage paid at Concord, N. H. Printed in U.S.A. *© 1966 by Mercury Press, Inc. All rights including translations into other languages, reserved. Submissions must be accompanied by stamped, self-addressed envelopes; the Publisher assumes no responsibility for return of unsolicited manuscripts.*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Roger Zelazny was the recipient of two of the five awards presented at the recent Science Fiction Writers of America banquet: THE DOORS OF HIS FACE, THE LAMPS OF HIS MOUTH *for best novelet (from F&SF, March 1965), and* HE WHO SHAPES *for best novella (a tie with Brian Aldiss's* THE SALIVA TREE*). The dinner was notable for its lack of panegyrical comment, but we will be holding no one from their fruit cup if we say here that we feel the awards well deserved—because Mr. Zelazny writes with style and feeling, because he fashions inventive situations and real characters, because his stories are highly individual without being repetitious, and finally because he has given us the opportunity to publish such fine pieces as* A ROSE FOR ECCLESIASTES; THE DOORS OF HIS FACE; THE LAMPS OF HIS MOUTH; AND CALL ME CONRAD; *and, here,* THIS MOMENT OF THE STORM.

THIS MOMENT OF THE STORM

by Roger Zelazny

BACK ON EARTH, MY OLD PHILOSOPHY prof—possibly because he'd misplaced his lecture notes—came into the classroom one day and scrutinized his sixteen victims for the space of half a minute. Satisfied then, that a sufficiently profound tone had been established, he asked:

"What is a man?"

He had known exactly what he was doing. He'd had an hour and a half to kill, and eleven of the sixteen were coeds (nine of them in liberal arts, and the other two stuck with an Area Requirement).

One of the other two, who was in the pre-med program, proceeded to provide a strict biological classification.

The prof (McNitt was his name, I suddenly recall) nodded then, and asked:

"Is that all?"

And there was his hour and a half.

I learned that Man is the Reasoning Animal, Man is the One Who Laughs, Man is greater than beasts but less than angels, Man is the one who watches himself watch himself doing things he

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

knows are absurd (this from a Comparative Lit gal), Man is the culture-transmitting animal, Man is the spirit which aspires, affirms, loves, the one who uses tools, buries his dead, devises religions, and the one who tries to define himself. (That last from Paul Schwartz, my roommate—which I thought pretty good, on the spur of the moment. Wonder whatever became of Paul?)

Anyhow, to most of these I say "perhaps" or "partly, but—" or just plain "crap!" I still think mine was the best, because I had a chance to try it out, on Tierra del Cygnus, Land of the Swan . . .

I'd said, "Man is the sum total of everything he has done, wishes to do or not to do, and wishes he had done, or hadn't."

Stop and think about it for a minute. It's purposely as general as the others, but it's got room in it for the biology and the laughing and the aspiring, as well as the culture-transmitting, the love, and the room full of mirrors, and the defining. I even left the door open for religion, you'll note. But it's limiting, too. Ever met an oyster to whom the final phrases apply?

Tierra del Cygnus, Land of the Swan—delightful name.

Delightful place too, for quite awhile . . .

It was there that I saw Man's definitions, one by one, wiped from off the big blackboard, until only mine was left.

. . . My radio had been playing more static than usual. That's all.

For several hours there was no other indication of what was to come.

My hundred-thirty eyes had watched Betty all morning, on that clear, cool spring day with the sun pouring down its honey and lightning upon the amber fields, flowing through the streets, invading western store-fronts, drying curbstones, and washing the olive and umber buds that speared the skin of the trees there by the roadway; and the light that wrung the blue from the flag before Town Hall made orange mirrors out of windows, chased purple and violet patches across the shoulders of Saint Stephen's Range, some thirty miles distant, and came down upon the forest at its feet like some supernatural madman with a million buckets of paint—each of a different shade of green, yellow, orange, blue and red—to daub with miles-wide brushes at its heaving sea of growth.

Mornings the sky is cobalt, midday is turquoise, and sunset is emeralds and rubies, hard and flashing. It was halfway between cobalt and seamist at 1100 hours, when I watched Betty with my hundred-thirty eyes and saw nothing to indicate what was about to be. There was only that persistent piece of static, accompanying the piano and strings within my portable.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

It's funny how the mind personifies, engenders. Ships are always women: You say, "She's a good old tub," or, "She's a fast, tough number, this one," slapping a bulwark and feeling the aura of femininity that clings to the vessel's curves; or, conversely, "He's a bastard to start, that little Sam!" as you kick the auxiliary engine in an inland transport-vehicle; and hurricanes are always women, and moons, and seas. Cities, though, are different. Generally, they're neuter. Nobody calls New York or San Francisco "he" or "she". Usually, cities are just "it".

Sometimes, however, they do come to take on the attributes of sex. Usually, this is in the case of small cities near to the Mediterranean, back on Earth. Perhaps this is because of the sex-ridden nouns of the languages which prevail in that vicinity, in which case it tells us more about the inhabitants than it does about the habitations. But I feel that it goes deeper than that.

Betty was Beta Station for less than ten years. After two decades she was Betty officially, by act of Town Council. Why? Well, I felt at the time (ninety-some years ago), and still feel, that it was because she was what she was—a place of rest and repair, of surface-cooked meals and of new voices, new faces, of landscapes, weather, and natural light again, after that long haul through the big night, with its casting away of so much. She is not home, she is seldom destination, but she is like unto both. When you come upon light and warmth and music after darkness and cold and silence, it is Woman. The oldtime Mediterranean sailor must have felt it when he first spied port at the end of a voyage. *I* felt it when I first saw Beta Station—Betty—and the second time I saw her, also.

I am her Hell Cop.

. . . When six or seven of my hundred-thirty eyes flickered, then saw again, and the music was suddenly washed away by a wave of static, it was then that I began to feel uneasy.

I called Weather Central for a report, and the recorded girlvoice told me that seasonal rains were expected in the afternoon or early evening. I hung up and switched an eye from ventral to dorsal-vision.

Not a cloud. Not a ripple. Only a formation of green-winged skytoads, heading north, crossed the field of the lens.

I switched it back, and I watched the traffic flow, slowly, and without congestion, along Betty's prim, well-tended streets. Three men were leaving the bank and two more were entering. I recognized the three who were leaving, and in my mind I waved as I passed by. All was still at the post office, and patterns of normal activity lay upon the steel mills, the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

stockyard, the plast-synth plants, the airport, the spacer pads, and the surfaces of all the shopping complexes; vehicles came and went at the Inland Transport-Vehicle garages, crawling from the rainbow forest and the mountains beyond like dark slugs, leaving tread-trails to mark their comings and goings through wilderness; and the fields of the countryside were still yellow and brown, with occasional patches of green and pink; the country houses, mainly simple A-frame affairs, were chisel blade, spike-tooth, spire and steeple, each with a big lightning rod, and dipped in many colors and scooped up in the cups of my seeing and dumped out again, as I sent my eyes on their rounds and tended my gallery of one hundred-thirty changing pictures, on the big wall of the Trouble Center, there atop the Watch Tower of Town Hall.

The static came and went until I had to shut off the radio. Fragments of music are worse than no music at all.

My eyes, coasting weightless along magnetic lines, began to blink.

I knew then that we were in for *something.*

I sent an eye scurrying off toward Saint Stephen's at full speed, which meant a wait of about twenty minutes until it topped the range. Another, I sent straight up, skywards, which meant perhaps ten minutes for a long shot of the same scene. Then I put the autoscan in full charge of operations and went downstairs for a cup of coffee.

I entered the Mayor's outer office, winked at Lottie, the receptionist, and glanced at the inner door.

"Mayor in?" I asked.

I got an occasional smile from Lottie, a slightly heavy, but well-rounded girl of indeterminate age and intermittent acne, but this wasn't one of the occasions.

"Yes," she said, returning to the papers on her desk.

"Alone?"

She nodded, and her earrings danced. Dark eyes and dark complexion, she could have been kind of sharp, if only she'd fix her hair and use more makeup. Well . . .

I crossed to the door and knocked.

"Who?" asked the Mayor.

"Me," I said, opening it, "Godfrey Justin Holmes—'God' for short. I want someone to drink coffee with, and you're elected."

She turned in her swivel chair, away from the window she had been studying, and her blonde-*hair-white-hair-fused, short and* parted in the middle, gave a little stir as she turned—like a sunshot snowdrift struck by sudden winds.

She smiled and said, "I'm busy."

Eyes green, chin small, cute lit-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

tle ears—I love them all'—from an anonymous Valentine I'd sent her two months previous, and true.

". . . But not too busy to have coffee with God," she stated. "Have a throne, and I'll make us some instant."

I did, and she did.

While she was doing it, I leaned back, lit a cigarette I'd borrowed from her canister, and remarked, "Looks like rain."

"Uh-huh," she said.

"Not just making conversation," I told her. "There's a bad storm brewing somewhere—over Saint Stephen's, I think. I'll know real soon."

"Yes, grandfather," she said, bringing me my coffee. "You old timers with all your aches and pains are often better than Weather Central, it's an established fact. I won't argue."

She smiled, frowned, then smiled again.

I set my cup on the edge of her desk.

"Just wait and see," I said. "If it makes it over the mountains, it'll be a nasty high-voltage job. It's already jazzing up reception."

Big-bowed white blouse, and black skirt around a well-kept figure. She'd be forty in the fall, but she'd never completely tamed her facial reflexes—which was most engaging, so far as I was concerned. Spontaneity of expression so often vanishes so soon. I could see the sort of child she'd been by looking at her, listening to her now. The thought of being forty was bothering her again, too, I could tell. She always kids me about age when age is bothering her.

See, I'm around thirty-five, actually, which makes me her junior by a bit, but she'd heard her grandfather speak of me when she was a kid, before I came back again this last time. I'd filled out the balance of his two-year term, back when Betty-Beta's first mayor, Wyeth, had died after two months in office. I was born five hundred ninety-seven years ago, on Earth, but I spent about five hundred sixty-two of those years sleeping, during my long jaunts between the stars. I've made a few more trips than a few others; consequently, I am an anachronism. I am really, of course, only as old as I look—but still, people always seem to feel that I've cheated somehow, especially women in their middle years. Sometimes it is most disconcerting . . .

"Eleanor," said I, "your term will be up in November. Are you still thinking of running again?"

She took off her narrow, elegantly-trimmed glasses and brushed her eyelids with thumb and forefinger. Then she took a sip of coffee.

"I haven't made up my mind."

"I ask not for press-release purposes," I said, "but for my own."

"Really, I haven't decided," she told me. "I don't know . . ."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Okay, just checking. Let me know if you do."

I drank some coffee.

After a time, she said, "Dinner Saturday? As usual?"

"Yes, good."

"I'll tell you then."

"Fine—capital."

As she looked down into her coffee, I saw a little girl staring into a pool, waiting for it to clear, to see her reflection or to see the bottom of the pool, or perhaps both.

She smiled at whatever it was she finally saw.

"A bad storm?" she asked me.

"Yep. Feel it in my bones."

"Tell it to go away?"

"Tried. Don't think it will, though."

"Better batten some hatches, then."

"It wouldn't hurt and it might help."

"The weather satellite will be overhead in another half hour. You'll have something sooner?"

"Think so. Probably any minute."

I finished my coffee, washed out the cup.

"Let me know right away what it is."

"Check. Thanks for the coffee."

Lottie was still working and did not look up as I passed.

Upstairs again, my highest eye was now high enough. I stood it on its tail and collected a view of the distance: Fleecy mobs of clouds boiled and frothed on the other side of Saint Stephen's. The mountain range seemed a breakwall, a dam, a rocky shoreline. Beyond it, the waters were troubled.

My other eye was almost in position. I waited the space of half a cigarette, then it delivered me a sight:

Gray, and wet and impenetrable, a curtain across the countryside, that's what I saw.

. . . And advancing.

I called Eleanor.

"It's gonna rain, chillun," I said.

"Worth some sandbags?"

"Possibly."

"Better be ready then. Okay. Thanks."

I returned to my watching.

Tierra del Cygnus, Land of the Swan—delightful name. It refers to both the planet and its sole continent.

How to describe the world, like quick? Well, roughly Earth-size; actually, a bit smaller, and more watery. —As for the main landmass, first hold a mirror up to South America, to get the big bump from the right side over to the left, then rotate it ninety degrees in a counter-clockwise direction and push it up into the northern hemisphere. Got that? Good. Now grab it by the tail and pull. Stretch it another six or seven hundred miles, slimming down the middle as you do, and let the last five or six hundred fall across the equator. There

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

you have Cygnus, its big gulf partly in the tropics, partly not. Just for the sake of thoroughness, while you're about it, break Australia into eight pieces and drop them about at random down in the southern hemisphere, calling them after the first eight letters in the Greek alphabet. Put a big scoop of vanilla at each pole, and don't forget to tilt the globe about eighteen degrees before you leave. Thanks.

I recalled my wandering eyes, and I kept a few of the others turned toward Saint Stephen's until the cloudbanks breasted the range about an hour later. By then, though, the weather satellite had passed over and picked the thing up also. It reported quite an extensive cloud cover on the other side. The storm had sprung up quickly, as they often do here on Cygnus. Often, too, they disperse just as quickly, after an hour or so of heaven's artillery. But then there are the bad ones—sometimes lingering and lingering, and bearing more thunderbolts in their quivers than any Earth storm.

Betty's position, too, is occasionally precarious, though its advantages, in general, offset its liabilities. We are located on the gulf, about twenty miles inland, and are approximately three miles removed (in the main) from a major river, the Noble; part of Betty does extend down to its banks, but this is a smaller part. We are almost a strip city, falling mainly into an area some seven miles in length and two miles wide, stretching inland, east from the river, and running roughly parallel to the distant seacoast. Around eighty percent of the 100,000 population is concentrated about the business district, five miles in from the river.

We are not the lowest land about, but we are far from being the highest. We are certainly the most level in the area. This latter feature, as well as our nearness to the equator, was a deciding factor in the establishment of Beta Station. Some other things were our proximity both to the ocean and to a large river. There are nine other cities on the continent, all of them younger and smaller, and three of them located upriver from us. We are the potential capital of a potential country.

We're a good, smooth, easy landing site for drop-boats from orbitting interstellar vehicles, and we have major assets for future growth and coordination when it comes to expanding across the continent. Our original *raison d'etre*, though, was Stopover, repair-point, supply depot, and refreshment stand, physical and psychological, on the way out to other, more settled worlds, further along the line. Cyg was discovered later than many others—it just happened that way—and the others got off to earlier starts. Hence, the others generally attract more colonists. We are still quite primitive. Self-sufficiency,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

in order to work on our population: land scale, demanded a society on the order of that of the mid-nineteenth century in the American southwest—at least for purposes of getting started. Even now, Cyg is still partly on a natural economy system, although Earth Central technically determines the coin of the realm.

Why Stopover, if you sleep most of the time between the stars?

Think about it awhile, and I'll tell you later if you're right.

The thunderheads rose in the east, sending billows and streamers this way and that, until it seemed from the formations that Saint Stephen's was a balcony full of monsters, leaning and craning their necks over the rail in the direction of the stage, us. Cloud piled upon slate-colored cloud, and then the wall slowly began to topple.

I heard the first rumbles of thunder almost half an hour after lunch, so I knew it wasn't my stomach.

Despite all my eyes, I moved to a window to watch. It was like a big, gray, aerial glacier plowing the sky.

There was a wind now, for I saw the trees suddenly quiver and bow down. This would be our first storm of the season. The turquoise fell back before it, and finally it smothered the sun itself. Then there were drops upon the windowpane, then rivulets.

Flint-like, the highest peaks of Saint Stephen's scraped its belly and were showered with sparks. After a moment it bumped into something with a terrible crash, and the rivulets on the quartz panes turned into rivers.

I went back to my gallery, to smile at dozens of views of people scurrying for shelter. A smart few had umbrellas and raincoats. The rest ran like blazes. People never pay attention to weather reports; this, I believe, is a constant factor in man's psychological makeup, stemming probably from an ancient tribal distrust of the shaman. You want them to be wrong. If they're right, then they're somehow superior, and this is even more uncomfortable than getting wet.

I remembered then that I had forgotten my raincoat, umbrella and rubbers. But it *had* been a beautiful morning, and W.C. *could* have been wrong . . .

Well, I had another cigarette and leaned back in my big chair. No storm in the world could knock my eyes out of the sky.

I switched on the filters and sat and watched the rain pour past.

Five hours later it was still raining, and rumbling and dark.

I'd had hopes that it would let up by quitting time, but when Chuck Fuller came around the picture still hadn't changed any. Chuck was my relief that night, the evening Hell Cop.

He seated himself beside my desk.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"You're early," I said. "They don't start paying you for another hour."

"Too wet to do anything but sit. 'Rather sit here than at home."

"Leaky roof?"

He shook his head.

"Mother-in-law. Visiting again."

I nodded.

"One of the disadvantages of a small world.

He clasped his hands behind his neck and leaned back in the chair, staring off in the direction of the window. I could feel one of his outbursts coming.

"You know how old I am?" he asked, after awhile.

"No," I said, which was a lie. He was twenty-nine.

"Twenty-seven," he told me, "and going to be twenty-eight soon. Know where I've been?"

"No."

"No place, that's where! I was born and raised on this crummy world! And I married and I settled down here—and I've never been off it! Never could afford it when I was younger. Now I've got a family . . ."

He leaned forward again, rested his elbows on his knees, like a kid. Chuck would look like a kid when he was fifty. —Blond hair, close-cropped, pug nose, kind of scrawny, takes a suntan quickly, and well. Maybe he'd act like a kid at fifty, too. I'll never know.

I didn't say anything because I didn't have anything to say.

He was quiet for a long while again.

Then he said, "*You've* been around."

After a minute, he went on:

"You were born on Earth. Earth! And you visited lots of other worlds too, before I was even born. Earth is only a name to me. And pictures. And all the others—they're the *same*! Pictures. Names . . ."

I waited, then after I grew tired of waiting I said, " 'Miniver Cheevy, child of scorn . . .' "

"What does that mean?"

"It's the beginning to an ancient poem. It's an ancient poem now, but it wasn't really ancient when I was a boy. Just old. *I* had friends, relatives, even in-laws, once myself. They are not just bones now. They are dust. Real dust, not metaphorical dust. The past fifteen years seem fifteen years to me, the same as to you, but they're not. They are already many chapters back in the history books. Whenever you travel between the stars you automatically bury the past. The world you leave will be filled with strangers if you ever return—or caricatures of your friends, your relatives, even yourself. It's no great trick to be a grandfather at sixty, a great-grandfather at seventy-five or eighty—but go away for three hundred years, and then come back and meet your great-great-great-great-great-great-great-great-great-great-great-great-grandson, who happens to be fifty-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

five years old, and puzzled, when you look him up. It shows you just how alone you really are. You are not simply a man without a country or without a world. You are a man without a time. You and the centuries do not belong to each other. You are like the rubbish that drifts between the stars."

"It would be worth it," he said.

I laughed. I'd had to listen to his gripes every month or two for over a year and a half. It had never bothered me much before, so I guess it was a cumulative effect that day—the rain, and Saturday night next, and my recent library visits, *and* his complaining, that had set me off.

His last comment had been too much. "It would be worth it." What could I say to that?

I laughed.

He turned bright red.

"You're laughing at me!"

He stood up and glared down.

"No I'm not," I said, "I'm laughing at me. I shouldn't have been bothered by what you said, but I was. That tells me something funny about me."

"What?"

"I'm getting sentimental in my old age, and that's funny."

"Oh." He turned his back on me and walked over to the window and stared out. Then he jammed his hands into his pockets and turned around and looked at me.

"Aren't you happy?" he asked. "Really, I mean? You've got money, and no strings on you. You could pick up and leave on the next I-V that passes, if you wanted to."

"Sure I'm happy," I told him. "My coffee was cold. Forget it."

"Oh," again. He turned back to the window in time to catch a bright flash full in the face, and to have to compete with thunder to get his next words out. "I'm sorry," I heard him say, as in the distance. "It just seems to me that you should be one of the happiest guys around . . ."

"I am. It's the weather today. It's got everybody down in the mouth, yourself included."

"Yeah, you're right," he said. "Look at it rain, will you? Haven't seen any rain in months . . ."

"They've been saving it all up for today."

He chuckled.

"I'm going down for a cup of coffee and a sandwich before I sign on. Can I bring you anything?"

"No, thanks."

"Okay. See you in a little while."

He walked out whistling. He never stays depressed. Like a kid's moods, his moods, up and down, up and down . . . And he's a Hell Cop. Probably the worst possible job for him, having to keep his attention in one place for so long. They say the job title comes from the name of an antique flying vehicle—a hellcopper, I think. We send our eyes on their appointed rounds, and they can hover or

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

soar or back up, just like those old machines could. We patrol the city and the adjacent countryside. Law enforcement isn't much of a problem on Cyg. We never peek in windows or send an eye into a building without an invitation. Our testimony is admissable in court—or, if we're fast enough to press a couple buttons, the tape that we make does an even better job—and we can dispatch live or robot cops in a hurry, depending on which will do a better job.

There isn't much crime on Cyg, though, despite the fact that everybody carries a sidearm of some kind, even little kids. Everybody knows pretty much what their neighbors are up to, and there aren't too many places for a fugitive to run. We're mainly aerial traffic cops, with an eye out for local wildlife (which is the reason for all the sidearms).

S.P.C.U. is what we call the latter function—Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Us—which is the reason each of my hundred-thirty eyes has six forty-five caliber eyelashes.

There are things like the cute little panda-puppy—oh, about three feet high at the shoulder when it sits down on its rear like a teddy bear, and with big, square, silky ears, a curly pinto coat, large, limpid, brown eyes, pink tongue, button nose, powder puff tail, sharp little white teeth more poisonous than a Quemeda island viper's, and possessed of a way with mammal entrails like unto the way of an imaginative cat with a rope of catnip.

Then there's a *snapper*, which *looks* as mean as it sounds: a feathered reptile, with three horns on its armored head—one beneath each eye, like a tusk, and one curving skyward from the top of its nose—legs about eighteen inches long, and a four-foot tail which it raises straight into the air whenever it jogs along at greyhound speed, and which it swings like a sandbag—and a mouth full of long, sharp teeth.

Also, there are amphibious things which come from the ocean by way of the river on occasion. I'd rather not speak of them. They're kind of ugly and vicious.

Anyway, those are some of the reasons why there are Hell Cops—not just on Cyg, but on many, many frontier worlds. I've been employed in that capacity on several of them, and I've found that an experienced H.C. can always find a job Out Here. It's like being a professional clerk back home.

Chuck took longer than I thought he would, came back after I was technically off duty, looked happy though, so I didn't say anything. There was some pale lipstick on his collar and a grin on his face, so I bade him good morrow, picked up my cane, and departed in the direction of the big washing machine.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

It was coming down too hard for me to go the two blocks to my car on foot.

I called a cab and waited another fifteen minutes. Eleanor had decided to keep Mayor's Hours, and she'd departed shortly after lunch; and almost the entire staff had been released an hour early because of the weather. Consequently, Town Hall was full of dark offices and echoes. I waited in the hallway behind the main door, listening to the purr of the rain as it fell, and hearing its gurgle as it found its way into the gutters. It beat the street and shook the windowpanes and made the windows cold to touch.

I'd planned on spending the evening at the library, but I changed my plans as I watched the weather happen. —Tomorrow, or the next day, I decided. It was an evening for a good meal, a hot bath, my own books and brandy, and early to bed. It was good sleeping weather, if nothing else. A cab pulled up in front of the Hall and blew its horn.

I ran.

The next day the rain let up for perhaps an hour in the morning. Then a slow drizzle began; and it did not stop again.

It went on to become a steady downpour by afternoon.

The following day was Friday, which I always have off, and I was glad that it was.

Put dittoes under Thursday's weather report. That's Friday.

But I decided to do something anyway.

I lived down in that section of town near the river. The Noble was swollen, and the rains kept adding to it. Sewers had begun to clog and back up; water ran in the streets. The rain kept coming down and widening the puddles and lakelets, and it was accompanied by drum solos in the sky and the falling of bright forks and sawblades. Dead skytoads were washed along the gutters, like burnt-out fireworks. Ball lightning drifted across Town Square; Saint Elmo's Fire clung to the flag pole, the Watch Tower, and the big statue of Wyeth trying to look heroic.

I headed uptown to the library, pushing my car slowly through the countless beaded curtains. The big furniture movers in the sky were obviously non-union, because they weren't taking any coffee breaks. Finally, I found a parking place and I umbrellaed my way to the library and entered.

I have become something of a bibliophile in recent years. It is not so much that I hunger and thirst after knowledge, but that I am news-starved.

It all goes back to my position in the big mixmaster. Admitted, there are *some* things faster than light, like the phase velocities of radio waves in ion plasma, or the tips of the ion-modulated light-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

beams of Duckbill, the comm-set-up back in Sol System, whenever the hinges of the beak snap shut on Earth—but these are highly restricted instances, with no application whatsoever to the passage of shiploads of people and objects between the stars. You can't exceed lightspeed when it comes to the movement of matter. You can edge up pretty close, but that's about it.

Life can be suspended though, that's easy—it can be switched off and switched back on again with no trouble at all. This is why *I* have lasted so long. If we can't speed up the ships, we *can* slow down the people—slow them until they stop—and *let* the vessel, moving at near-lightspeed, take half a century, or more if it needs it, to convey its passengers to where they are going. This is why I am very alone. Each little death means resurrection into both another land and another time. I have had several, and *this* is why I have become a bibliophile: news travels slowly, as slowly as the ships and the people. Buy a newspaper before you hop aboard ship and it will still be a newspaper when you reach your destination—but back where you bought it, it would be considered an historical document. Send a letter back to Earth and your correspondent's grandson may be able to get an answer back to your great-grandson, if the message makes real good connections and both kids live long enough.

All the little libraries Out Here are full of rare books—first editions of best sellers which people pick up before they leave Someplace Else, and which they often donate after they've finished. We assume that these books have entered the public domain by the time they reach here, and we reproduce them and circulate our own editions. No author has ever sued, and no reproducer has ever been around to *be* sued by representatives, designates, or assigns.

We are completely autonomous and are always behind the times, because there is a transit-lag which cannot be overcome. Earth Central, therefore, exercises about as much control over us as a boy jiggling a broken string while looking up at his kite.

Perhaps Yeats had something like this in mind when he wrote that fine line, "Things fall apart; the center cannot hold". I doubt it, but I still have to go to the library to read the news.

The day melted around me.

The words flowed across the screen in my booth as I read newspapers and magazines, untouched by human hands, and the waters flowed across Betty's acres, pouring down from the mountains now, washing the floors of the forest, churning our fields to peanut-butter, flooding basements, soaking its way through everything, and tracking our streets with mud.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

I hit the library cafeteria for lunch, where I learned from a girl in a green apron and yellow skirts (which swished pleasantly) that the sandbag crews were now hard at work and that there was no eastbound traffic past Town Square.

After lunch I put on my slicker and boots and walked up that way.

Sure enough, the sandbag wall was already waist high across Main Street; but then, the water *was* swirling around at ankle level, and more of it falling every minute.

I looked up at old Wyeth's statue. His halo had gone away now, which was sort of to be expected. It had made an honest mistake and realized it after a short time.

He was holding a pair of glasses in his left hand and sort of glancing down at me, as though a bit apprehensive, wondering perhaps, there inside all that bronze, if I would tell on him now and ruin his hard, wet, greenish splendor. Tell . . .? I guess I was the only one left around who really remembered the man. He had wanted to be the father of this great new country, literally, and he'd tried awfully hard. Three months in office and I'd had to fill out the rest of the two-year term. The death certificate gave the cause as "heart stoppage", but it didn't mention the piece of lead which had helped slow things down a bit. Everybody involved is gone now: the irate husband, the frightened wife, the coroner. All but me. And I won't tell anybody if Wyeth's statue won't, because he's a hero now, and we need heroes' statues Out Here even more than we do heroes. He *did* engineer a nice piece of relief work during the Butler Township floods, and he may as well be remembered for that.

I winked at my old boss, and the rain dripped from his nose and fell into the puddle at my feet.

I walked back to the library through loud sounds and bright flashes, hearing the splashing and the curses of the work crew as the men began to block off another street. Black, overhead, an eye drifted past. I waved, and the filter snapped up and back down again. I think H.C. John Keams was tending shop that afternoon, but I'm not sure.

Suddenly the heavens opened up and it was like standing under a waterfall.

I reached for a wall and there wasn't one, slipped then, and managed to catch myself with my cane before I flopped. I found a doorway and huddled.

Ten minutes of lightning and thunder followed. Then, after the blindness and the deafness passed away and the rains had eased a bit, I saw that the street (Second Avenue) had become a river. Bearing all sorts of garbage, papers, hats, sticks, mud, it sloshed past my niche, gurgling nastily. It looked

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

to be over my boot tops, so I waited for it to subside.

It didn't.

It got right up in there with me and started to play footsie.

So, then seemed as good a time as any. Things certainly weren't getting any better.

I tried to run, but with filled boots the best you can manage is a fast wade, and my boots were filled after three steps.

That shot the afternoon. How can you concentrate on anything with wet feet? I made it back to the parking lot, then churned my way homeward, feeling like a riverboat captain who really wanted to be a camel driver.

It seemed more like evening than afternoon when I pulled up into my damp but unflooded garage. It seemed more like night than evening in the alley I cut through on the way to my apartment's back entrance. I hadn't seen the sun for several days, and it's funny how much you can miss it when it takes a vacation. The sky was a sable dome, and the high brick walls of the alley were cleaner than I'd ever seen them, despite the shadows.

I stayed close to the lefthand wall, in order to miss some of the rain. As I had driven along the river I'd noticed that it was already reaching after the high water marks on the sides of the piers. The Noble was a big, spoiled, blood sausage, ready to burst its skin. A lightning flash showed me the whole alley, and I slowed in order to avoid puddles.

I moved ahead, thinking of dry socks and dry martinis, turned a corner to the right, and it struck at me: an org.

Half of its segmented body was reared at a forty-five degree angle above the pavement, which placed its wide head with the traffic-signal eyes saying "Stop", about three and a half feet off the ground, as it rolled toward me on all its pale little legs, with its mouthful of death aimed at my middle.

I pause now in my narrative for a long digression concerning my childhood, which, if you will but consider the circumstances, I was obviously quite fresh on in an instant:

Born, raised, educated on Earth, I had worked two summers in a stockyard while going to college. I still remember the smells and the noises of the cattle; I used to prod them out of the pens and on their way up the last mile. And I remember the smells and noises of the university: the formaldehyde in the Bio labs, the sounds of Freshmen slaughtering French verbs, the overpowering aroma of coffee mixed with cigarette smoke in the Student Union, the splash of the newly-pinned frat man as his brothers tossed him into the lagoon down in front of the Art Museum, the sounds of ignored chapel bells and class bells, the smell of the lawn after the year's first mow-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ing (with big, black Andy perched on his grass-chewing monster, baseball cap down to his eyebrows, cigarette somehow not burning his left cheek), and always, always, the *tick-tick-snick-stamp!* as I moved up or down the strip. I had not wanted to take General Physical Education, but four semesters of it were required. The only out was to take a class in a special sport. I picked fencing because tennis, basketball, boxing, wrestling, handball, judo, all sounded too strenuous, and I couldn't afford a set of golf clubs. Little did I suspect what would follow this choice. It was as strenuous as any of the others, and more than several. But I liked it. So I tried out for the team in my Sophomore year, made it on the épée squad, and picked up three varsity letters, because I stuck with it through my Senior year. Which all goes to show: Cattle who persevere in looking for an easy out still wind up in the abattoir, but they may enjoy the trip a little more.

When I came out here on the raw frontier where people all carry weapons, I had my cane made. It combines the better features of the epee and the cattle prod. Only, it is the kind of prod which, if you were to prod cattle with, they would never move again.

Over eight hundred volts, max, when the tip touches, if the stud in the handle is depressed properly . . .

My arm shot out and up and my fingers depressed the stud properly as it moved.

That was it for the org.

A noise came from between the rows of razor blades in its mouth as I scored a touch on its soft underbelly and whipped my arm away to the side—a noise halfway between an exhalation and "peep" —and that was it for the org (short for "organism-with-a-long-name-which-I-can't-remember").

I switched off my cane and walked around it. It was one of those things which sometimes come out of the river. I remember that I looked back at it three times, then I switched the cane on again at max and kept it that way till I was inside my apartment with the door locked behind me and all the lights burning.

Then I permitted myself to tremble, and after awhile I changed my socks and mixed my drink.

May your alleys be safe from orgs.

Saturday.

More rain.

Wetness was all.

The entire east side had been shored with sand bags. In some places they served only to create sandy waterfalls, where otherwise the streams would have flowed more evenly and perhaps a trifle more clearly. In other places they held it all back, for awhile.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

By then, there were six deaths as a direct result of the rains.

By then, there had been fires caused by the lightning, accidents by the water, sicknesses by the dampness, the cold.

By then, property damages were beginning to mount pretty high.

Everyone was tired and angry and miserable and wet, by then. This included me.

Though Saturday was Saturday, I went to work. I worked in Eleanor's office, with her. We had the big relief map spread on a table, and six mobile eyescreens were lined against one wall. Six eyes hovered above the half-dozen emergency points and kept us abreast of the actions taken upon them. Several new telephones and a big radio set stood on the desk. Five ashtrays looked as if they wanted to be empty, and the coffee pot chuckled cynically at human activity.

The Noble had almost reached its high water mark. We were not an isolated storm center by any means. Up river, Butler Township was hurting, Swan's Nest was a-drip, Laurie was weeping into the river, and the wilderness in between was shaking and streaming.

Even though we were in direct contact we went into the field on three occasions that morning—once, when the north-south bridge over the Lance River collapsed and was washed down toward the Noble as far as the bend by the Mack steel mill; again, when the Wildwood Cemetery, set up on a storm-gouged hill to the east, was plowed deeply, graves opened, and several coffins set awash; and finally, when three houses full of people toppled, far to the east. Eleanor's small flyer was buffeted by the winds as we fought our way through to these sites for on-the-spot supervision; I navigated almost completely by instruments. Downtown proper was accommodating evacuees left and right by then. I took three showers that morning and changed clothes twice.

Things slowed down a bit in the afternoon, including the rain. The cloud cover didn't break, but a drizzle-point was reached which permitted us to gain a little on the waters. Retaining walls were reinforced, evacuees were fed and dried, some of the rubbish was cleaned up. Four of the six eyes were returned to their patrols, because four of the emergency points were no longer emergency points.

. . . And we wanted all of the eyes for the org patrol.

Inhabitants of the drenched forest were also on the move. Seven *snappers* and a horde of panda-puppies were shot that day, as well as a few crawly things from the troubled waters of the Noble—not to mention assorted branch-snakes, stingbats, borers, and land-eels.

By 1900 hours it seemed that a stalemate had been achieved.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Eleanor and I climbed into her flyer and drifted skyward.

We kept rising. Finally, there was a hiss as the cabin began to pressurize itself. The night was all around us. Eleanor's face, in the light from the instrument panel, was a mask of weariness. She raised her hands to her temples as if to remove it, and then when I looked back again it appeared that she had. A faint smile lay across her lips now and her eyes sparkled. A stray strand of hair shadowed her brow.

"Where are you taking me?" she asked.

"Up, high," said I, "above the storm."

"Why?"

"It's been many days," I said, since we have seen an uncluttered sky."

"True," she agreed, and as she leaned forward to light a cigarette I noticed that the part in her hair had gone all askew. I wanted to reach out and straighten it for her, but I didn't.

We plunged into the sea of clouds.

Dark was the sky, moonless. The stars shone like broken diamonds. The clouds were a floor of lava.

We drifted. We stared up into the heavens. I "anchored" the flyer, like an eye set to hover, and lit a cigarette myself.

"You are older than I am," she finally said, "really. You know?"

"No."

"There is a certain wisdom, a certain strength, something like the essence of the time that passes —that seeps into a man as he sleeps between the stars. I know, because I can feel it when I'm around you."

"No," I said.

"Then maybe it's people expecting you to have the strength of centuries that gives you something like it. It was probably there to begin with."

"No."

She chuckled.

"It isn't exactly a positive sort of thing either."

I laughed.

"You asked me if I was going to run for office again this fall. The answer is 'no'. I'm planning on retiring. I want to settle down."

"With anyone special?"

"Yes, very special, Juss," she said, and she smiled at me and I kissed her, but not for too long, because the ash was about to fall off her cigarette and down the back of my neck.

So we put both cigarettes out and drifted above the invisible city, beneath a sky without a moon.

I mentioned earlier that I would tell you about Stopovers. If you are going a distance of a hundred forty-five light years and are taking maybe a hundred-fifty actual years to do it, why stop and stretch your legs?

Well, first of all and mainly, al-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

most nobody sleeps out the whole jaunt. There are lots of little gadgets which require human monitoring at all times. No one is going to sit there for a hundred-fifty years and watch them, all by himself. So everyone takes a turn or two, passengers included. They are all briefed on what to do till the doctor comes, and who to awaken and how to go about it, should troubles crop up. Then everyone takes a turn at guard mount for a month or so, along with a few companions. There are always hundreds of people aboard, and after you've worked down through the role you take it again from the top. All sorts of mechanical agents are backing them up, many of which they are unaware of (to protect *against* them, as well as *with* them —in the improbable instance of several oddballs getting together and deciding to open a window, change course, murder passengers, or things like that), and the people are well-screened and carefully matched up, so as to check and balance each other as well as the machinery. All of this because gadgets and people both bear watching.

After several turns at ship's guard, interspersed with periods of cold sleep, you tend to grow claustrophobic and somewhat depressed. Hence, when there is an available Stopover, it is utilized, to restore mental equilibrium and to rearouse flagging animal spirits. This also serves the purpose of enriching the life and economy of the Stopover world, by whatever information and activities you may have in you.

Stopover, therefore, has become a traditional holiday on many worlds, characterized by festivals and celebrations on some of the smaller ones, and often by parades and world-wide broadcast interviews and press conferences on those with greater populations. I understand that it is now pretty much the same on Earth, too, when ever colonial visitors stop by. In fact, one fairly unsuccessful young starlet, Marilyn Austin, made a long voyage Out, stayed a few months, and returned on the next vessel headed back. After appearing on tri-dee a couple times, sounding off about interstellar culture, and flashing her white, white teeth, she picked up a flush contract, a third husband, and her first big part in tapes. All of which goes to show the value of Stopovers.

I landed us atop Helix, Betty's largest apartment-complex, wherein Eleanor had her double-balconied corner suite, affording views both of the distant Noble and of the lights of Posh Valley, Betty's residential section.

Eleanor prepared steaks, with baked potato, cooked corn, beer—everything I liked. I was happy and sated and such, and I stayed till around midnight, making

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

plans for our future. Then I took a cab back to Town Square, where I was parked.

When I arrived, I thought I'd check with the Trouble Center just to see how things were going. So I entered the Hall, stamped my feet, brushed off excess waters, hung my coat, and proceeded up the empty hallway to the elevator.

The elevator was too quiet. They're supposed to rattle, you know? They shouldn't sigh softly and have doors that open and close without a sound. So I walked around an embarrassing corner on my way to the Trouble Center.

It was a pose Rodin might have enjoyed working with. All I can say is that it's a good thing I stopped by when I did, rather than five or ten minutes later.

Chuck Fuller and Lottie, Eleanor's secretary, were practicing mouth to mouth resuscitation and keeping the victim warm techniques, there on the couch in the little alcove off to the side of the big door to T.C.

Chuck's back was to me, but Lottie spotted me over his shoulder, and her eyes widened and she pushed him away. He turned his head quickly.

"Juss . . ." he said.

I nodded.

"Just passing by," I told him. "Thought I'd stop in to say hello and take a look at the eyes."

"Uh—everything's going real well," he said, stepping back into the hallway. "It's on auto right now, and I'm on my—uh, coffee break. Lottie is on night duty, and she came by to—to see if we had any reports we needed typed. She had a dizzy spell, so we came out here where the couch . . ."

"Yeah, she looks a little—peaked," I said. "There are smelling salts and aspirins in the medicine chest."

I walked on by into the Center, feeling awkward.

Chuck followed me after a couple minutes. I was watching the screens when he came up beside me. Things appeared to be somewhat in hand, though the rains were still moistening the one hundred thirty views of Betty.

"Uh, Juss," he said, "I didn't know you were coming by . . ."

"Obviously."

"What I'm getting at is—you won't report me, will you?"

"No, I won't report you."

". . . And you wouldn't mention it to Cynthia, would you?"

"Your extracurricular activities," I said, "are your own business. As a friend, I suggest you do them on your own time and in a more propitious location. But it's already beginning to slip my mind. I'm sure I'll forget the whole thing in another minute."

"Thanks, Juss," he said.

I nodded.

"What's Weather Central have to say these days?" I asked, raising the phone.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

He shook his head, so I dialed and listened.

"Bad," I said, hanging up. "More wet to come."

"Damn," he announced and lit a cigarette, his hands shaking. "This weather's getting me down."

"Me too," said I. "I'm going to run now, because I want to get home before it starts in bad again. I'll probably be around tomorrow. See you."

"Night."

I elevated back down, fetched my coat, and left. I didn't see Lottie anywhere about, but she probably was, waiting for me to go.

I got to my car and was halfway home before the faucets came on full again. The sky was torn open with lightnings, and a sizzlecloud stalked the city like a long-legged arachnid, forking down bright limbs and leaving tracks of fire where it went. I made it home in another fifteen minutes, and the phenomenon was still in progress as I entered the garage. As I walked up the alley (cane switched on) I could hear the distant sizzle and the rumble, and a steady half-light filled the spaces between the buildings, from its *flash-burn-flash-burn* striding.

Inside, I listened to the thunder and the rain, and I watched the apocalypse off in the distance.

Delirium of city under storm—

The buildings across the way were quite clear in the pulsing light of the thing. The lamps were turned off in my apartment so that I could better appreciate the vision. All of the shadows seemed incredibly black and inky, lying right beside glowing stairways, pediments, windowsills, balconies; and all of that which was illuminated seemed to burn as though with an internal light. Overhead, the living/not living insect-thing of fire stalked, and an eye wearing a blue halo was moving across the tops of nearby buildings. The fires pulsed and the clouds burnt like the hills of Gehenna; the thunders burbled and banged; and the white rain drilled into the roadway which had erupted into a steaming lather. Then a *snapper*, tri-horned, wet-feathered, demon-faced, sword-tailed, and green, raced from around a corner, a moment after I'd heard a sound which I had thought to be a part of the thunder. The creature ran, at an incredible speed, along the smoky pavement. The eye swooped after it, adding a hail of lead to the falling raindrops. Both vanished up another street. It had taken but an instant, but in that instant it had resolved a question in my mind as to who should do the painting. Not El Greco, not Blake; no: Bosch. Without any question, Bosch—with his nightmare visions of the streets of Hell. He would be the one to do justice to this moment of the storm.

I watched until the sizzlecloud

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

drew its legs up into itself, hung like a burning cocoon, then died like an ember retreating into ash. Suddenly, it was very dark and there was only the rain.

Sunday was the day of chaos.

Candles burned, churches burned, people drowned, beasts ran wild in the streets (or swam there), houses were torn up by the roots and bounced like paper boats along the waterways, the great wind came down upon us, and after that the madness.

I was not able to drive to Town Hall, so Eleanor sent her flyer after me.

The basement was filled with water, and the ground floor was like Neptune's waiting room. All previous high water marks had been passed.

We were in the middle of the worst storm in Betty's history.

Operations had been transferred up onto the third floor. There was no way to stop things now. It was just a matter of riding it out and giving what relief we could. I sat before my gallery and watched.

It rained buckets, it rained vats; it rained swimming pools and lakes and rivers. For awhile it seemed that it rained oceans upon us. This was partly because of the wind which came in from the gulf and suddenly made it seem to rain sideways with the force of its blasts. It began at about noon and was gone in a few hours, but when it left our town was broken and bleeding. Wyeth lay on his bronze side, the flagpole was gone, there was no building without broken windows and water inside, we were suddenly suffering lapses of electrical power, and one of my eyes showed three panda-puppies devouring a dead child. Cursing, I killed them across the rain and the distance. Eleanor wept at my side. There was a report later of a pregnant woman who could only deliver by Caesarean section, trapped on a hilltop with her family, and in labor. We were still trying to get through to her with a flyer, but the winds . . . I saw burning buildings and the corpses of people and animals. I saw half-buried cars and splintered homes. I saw waterfalls where there had been no waterfalls before. I fired many rounds that day, and not just at beasts from the forest. Sixteen of my eyes had been shot out by looters. I hope that I never again see some of the films I made that day.

When the worst Sunday night in my life began, and the rains did not cease, I knew the meaning of despair for the third time in my life.

Eleanor and I were in the Trouble Center. The lights had just gone out for the eighth time. The rest of the staff was down on the third floor. We sat there in the dark without moving, without being able to do a single thing to halt the course of chaos. We could-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

n't even watch it until the power came back on.

So we talked.

Whether it was for five minutes or an hour, I don't really know. I remember telling her, though, about the girl buried on another world, whose death had set me to running. Two trips to two worlds and I had broken my bond with the times. But a hundred years of travel do not bring a century of forgetfulness—not when you cheat time with the *petite mort* of the cold sleep. Time's vengeance is memory, and though for an age you plunder the eye of seeing and empty the ear of sound, when you awaken your past is still with you. The worst thing to do then is to return to visit your wife's nameless grave in a changed land, to come back as a stranger to the place you had made your home. You run again then, and after a time you *do* forget, some, because a certain amount of actual time must pass for your also. But by then you are alone, all by yourself: completely alone. That was the *first* time in my life that I knew the meaning of despair. I read, I worked, I drank, I whored, but came the morning after and I was always me, by myself. I jumped from world to world, hoping things would be different, but with each change I was further away from all the things I had known.

Then another feeling gradually came upon me, and a really terrible feeling it was: There *must* be a time and a place best suited for each person who has ever lived. After the worst of my grief had left me and I had come to terms with the vanished past, I wondered about a man's place in time and in space. Where, and *when* in the cosmos would I most like to live out the balance of my days? —To live at my fullest potential? The past *was* dead, but perhaps a better time waited on some as yet undiscovered world, waited at one yet-to-be recorded moment in its history. How could I *ever* know? How could I ever be sure that my Golden Age did not lay but one more world away,and that I might be struggling in a Dark Era while the Renaissance of my days was but a ticket, a visa and a diary-page removed? That was my *second* despair. I did not know the answer until I came to the Land of the Swan. I do not know why I loved you, Eleanor, but I did, and that was my answer. Then the rains came.

When the lights returned we sat there and smoked. She had told me of her husband, who had died a hero's death in time to save him from the delirium tremors which would have ended his days. Died as the bravest die—not knowing why—because of a reflex, which after all had been a part of him, a reflex which had made him cast himself into the path of a pack of wolf-like creatures attacking the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

exploring party he was with—off in that forest at the foot of Saint Stephen's—to fight them with a machete and to be torn apart by them while his companions fled to the camp, where they made a stand and saved themselves. Such is the essence of valor: an unthinking moment, a spark along the spinal nerves, predetermined by the sum total of everything you have ever done, wished to do or not to do, and wish you had done, or hadn't, and then comes the pain.

We watched the gallery on the wall. Man is the reasoning animal? Greater than beasts but less than angels? Not the murderer I shot that night. He wasn't even the one who uses tools or buries his dead. —Laughs, aspires, affirms? I didn't see any of those going on. —Watches himself watch himself doing what he knows is absurd? Too sophisticated. He just did the absurd without watching. Like running back into a burning house after his favorite pipe and a can of tobacco. —Devises religions? I saw people praying, but they weren't devising. They were making last-ditch efforts at saving themselves, after they'd exhausted everything else they knew to do. Reflex.

The creature who loves?

That's the only one I might not be able to gainsay.

I saw a mother holding her daughter up on her shoulders while the water swirled about her armpits, and the little girl was holding her doll up above *her* shoulders, in the same way. But isn't that—the love—a part of the total? Of everything you have ever done, or wished? Positive or neg? I know that it is what made me leave my post, running, and what made me climb into Eleanor's flyer and what made me fight my way through the storm and out to that particular scene.

I didn't get there in time.

I shall never forget how glad I was that someone else did. Johnny Keams blinked his lights above me as he rose, and he radioed down:

"It's all right. They're okay. Even the doll."

"Good," I said, and headed back.

As I set the ship down on its balcony landing, one figure came toward me. As I stepped down, a gun appeared in Chuck's hand.

"I wouldn't kill you, Juss," he began, "But I'd wound you. Face that wall. I'm taking the flyer."

"Are you crazy?" I asked him.

"I know what I'm doing. I need it, Juss."

"Well, if you need it, there it is. You don't have to point a gun at me. I just got through needing it myself. Take it."

"Lottie and I both need it," he said. "Turn around!"

I turned toward the wall.

"What do you mean?" I asked.

"We're going away, together—now!"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"You *are* crazy," I said. "This is no time . . ."

"C'mon, Lottie," he called, and there was a rush of feet behind me and I heard the flyer's door open.

"Chuck!" I said. "We need you now! You can settle this thing peacefully, in a week, in a month, after some order has been restored. There *are* such things as divorces, you know."

"That won't get me off this world, Juss."

"So how is *this* going to?"

I turned, and I saw that he had picked up a large canvas bag from somewhere and had it slung over his left shoulder, like Santa Claus.

"Turn back around! I don't want to shoot you," he warned.

The suspicion came, grew stronger.

"Chuck, have you been looting?" I asked him.

"Turn around!"

"All right, I'll turn around. How far do you think you'll get?"

"Far enough," he said. "Far enough so that no one will find us —and when the time comes, we'll leave this world."

"No," I said. "I don't think you will, because I know you."

"We'll see." His voice was further away then.

I heard three rapid footsteps and the slamming of a door. I turned then, in time to see the flyer rising from the balcony.

I watched it go. I never saw either of them again.

Inside, two men were unconscious on the floor. It turned out that they were not seriously hurt. After I saw them cared for, I rejoined Eleanor in the Tower.

All that night did we wait, emptied, for morning.

Somehow, it came.

We sat and watched the light flow through the rain. So much had happened so quickly. So many things had occurred during the past week that we were unprepared for morning.

It brought an end to the rains.

A good wind came from out of the north and fought with the clouds, like En-ki with the serpent Tiamat. Suddenly, there was a canyon of cobalt.

A cloudquake shook the heavens and chasms of light opened across its dark landscape.

It was coming apart as we watched.

I heard a cheer, and I croaked in unison with it as the sun appeared.

The good, warm, drying, beneficent sun drew the highest peak of Saint Stephen's to its face and kissed both its cheeks.

There was a crowd before each window. I joined one and stared, perhaps for ten minutes.

When you awaken from a nightmare you do not normally find its ruins lying about your bedroom. This is one way of telling whether or not something was only a bad

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

dream, or whether or not you are really awake.

We walked the streets in great boots. Mud was everywhere. It was in basements and in machinery and in sewers and in living room clothes closets. It was on buildings and on cars and on people and on the branches of trees. It was broken brown blisters drying and waiting to be peeled off from clean tissue. Swarms of skytoads rose into the air when we approached, hovered like dragon-flies, returned to spoiling food stores after we had passed. Insects were having a heyday, too. Betty would have to be deloused. So many things were overturned or fallen down, and half-buried in the brown Sargassos of the streets. The dead had not yet been numbered. The water still ran by, but sluggish and foul. A stench was beginning to rise across the city. There were smashed-in store fronts and there was glass everywhere, and bridges fallen down and holes in the streets . . . But why go on? If you don't get the picture by now, you never will. It was the big morning after, following a drunken party by the gods. It is the lot of mortal man always to clean up their leavings or to be buried beneath them.

So clean we did, but by noon Eleanor could no longer stand. So I took her home with me, because we were working down near the harbor section and my place was nearer.

That's almost the whole story—light to darkness to light—except for the end, which I don't really know. I'll tell you of its beginning, though . . .

I dropped her off at the head of the alleyway, and she went on toward my apartment while I parked the car. Why didn't I keep her with me? I don't know. Unless it was because the morning sun made the world seem at peace, despite its filth. Unless it was because I was in love and the darkness was over, and the spirit of the night had surely departed.

I parked the car and started up the alley. I was halfway before the corner where I had met the org when I heard her cry out.

I ran. Fear gave me speed and strength and I ran to the corner and turned it.

The man had a bag, not unlike the one Chuck had carried away with him, lying beside the puddle in which he stood. He was going through Eleanor's purse, and she lay on the ground—so still!—with blood on the side of her head.

I cursed him and ran toward him, switching on my cane as I went. He turned, dropped her purse, and reached for the gun in his belt.

We were about thirty feet apart, so I threw my cane.

He drew his gun, pointed it at me, and my cane fell into the puddle in which he stood.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Flights of angels sang him to his rest, perhaps.

She was breathing, so I got her inside and got hold of a doctor—I don't remember how, not too clearly, anyway—and I waited and waited.

She lived for another twelve hours and then she died. She recovered consciousness twice before they operated on her, and not again after. She didn't say anything. She smiled at me once, and went to sleep again.

I don't know.

Anything, really.

It happened again that I became Betty's mayor, to fill in until November, to oversee the rebuilding. I worked, I worked my head off, and I left her bright and shiny, as I had found her. I think I could have won if I had run for the job that fall, but I did not want it.

The Town Council overrode my objections and voted to erect a statue of Godfrey Justin Holmes beside the statue of Eleanor Schirrer which was to stand in the Square across from cleaned-up Wyeth. I guess it's out there now.

I said that I would never return, but who knows? In a couple years, after some more history has passed, I may revisit a Betty full of strangers, if only to place a wreathe at the foot of the one statue. Who knows but that the entire continent may be steaming and clanking and whirring with automation by then, and filled with people from shore to shining shore?

There was a Stopover at the end of the year and I waved good-bye and climbed aboard and went away, anywhere.

I went aboard and went away, to sleep again the cold sleep.

Delirium of ship among stars—

Years have passed, I suppose. I'm not really counting them any more. But I think of this thing often: Perhaps there *is* a Golden Age someplace, a Renaissance for me sometime, a special time somewhere, somewhere but a ticket, a visa, a diary-page away. I don't know where or when. Who does? Where are all the rains of yesterday?

In the invisible city?

Inside me?

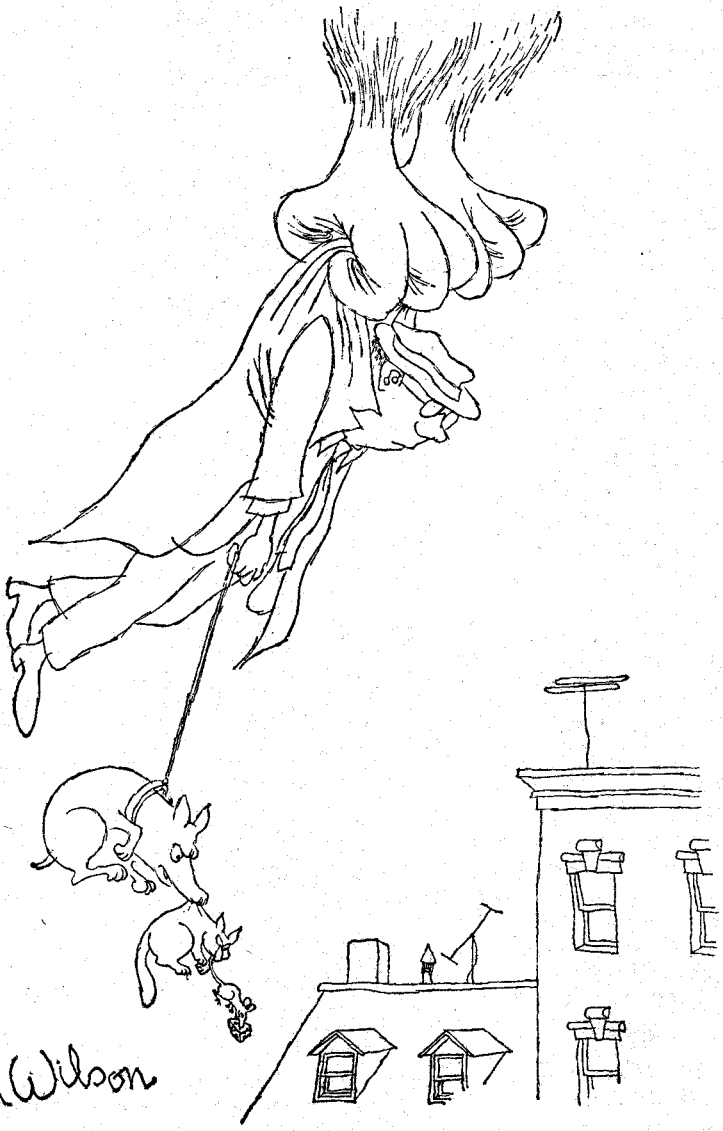
It is cold and quiet outside and the horizon is infinity. There is no sense of movement.

There is no moon, and the stars are very bright, like broken diamonds, all.

COMING SOON:

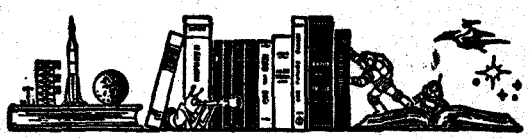
THE PRODUCTIONS OF TIME—a new and different novel by **John Brunner**—author of THE WHOLE MAN and THE SQUARES OF THE CITY—a chilling story unlike any you've ever read before.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

BOOKS



I HAVE A COMPLAINT TO MAKE, and I'm not quite sure to whom I should address it. So I'll start by saying that Tom Dardis, who runs Berkley, is a pleasant fellow who seems to know his s-f onions pretty well; and Damon Knight, who reads science fiction for Berkley, is an old friend who knows his science-fiction onions (and olives and anything else you care to name) very well indeed: so I'm not aiming this at either of them, individually.

Furthermore, Berkley has an exceptionally good list, including a disproportionate number of the better *new* names in the field: which is precisely why I am moved, finally, to protest thus publicly at the way they treat what they've got.

I have been trying to get review copies from Berkley for the past year. Please understand, this is not *just* a matter of privilege-of-position. Some of these books I wanted to read badly enough so that I'd have gone right out and *bought* them—and Reviewers' Rules be damned!—if I knew where. But outside of the big all-inclusive paperback gallery kind of place, Berkley editions are not easy to find—and while I am quite ready to spit on caste and status if I can do it readily at the corner drugstore, I am not prepared to tour the city for the purpose.

Anyhow: I wrote to Berkley, and authors who wanted their books reviewed wrote to Berkley. Walter Moudy, whose promising first novel was published by them early last year, sent me a copy himself. Kate Wilhelm—

I must explain that this has really been more than a one-year struggle. Among other things, Berkley sometimes publishes short-story collections with new material in them, which I am interested in seeing for my annual anthology. I had no inhibitions at all about buying those books: I just never knew they existed, until too late. If reviews appeared anywhere, they were written whenever the reviewer happened to find a book on the newsstand. Kate Wilhelm, as I started to say, gave me a copy of her MILE-LONG SPACESHIP months after it appeared and some months after the anthology for that year was completed; the first I knew of the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

book's existence was when she handed it to me.

Well, when nothing else worked, I phoned the office one day when I was in New York, and Vice-President Dardis invited me up. He gave me copies of everything they'd done recently that was around the office, and wrote himself a memo about what other titles to send me, and where. We had an interesting talk, and I left feeling I had the problem licked. Furthermore, every title he promised arrived shortly afterwards—including early galleys on a book by another publisher he had undertaken to get sent to me. (Ballard's CRYSTAL WORLD, to be published in May by Farrar; more, much more, on this next month.)

And that was that. Letters, phonecalls, have accomplished nothing since.

Now paperback books are cheap. When I wrote to the publishers of Feiffer's bestselling COMIC BOOKS HEROES (F&SF Books, May), and received unbound sheets instead of the ten-dollar book, I was neither offended nor inconvenienced. But pb's are *cheap*—especially Berkley's. Most of them are short—10,000 words or more under the 'standard' 60,000 word novel. Authors' advances are low; there is obviously no money wasted on the cover art; the paper is cheap; nothing is wasted on such niceties as proofreading or even running heads, in many cases. I have never heard of any money being thrown out by the company on advertising *or* promotion. You would think they could afford to send out review copies.

You'd think wrong. And then you'd be as surprised as I was to learn that there is *one* thing they'll do: they have agreed to send free copies of all their science fiction titles to all the members of the new Science Fiction Writers of America.

Which is how I came to discover that there was a truly outstanding first novel published during 1965—and an easy contender for best novel of the year by anyone. I got a copy of THE GENOCIDES[1] by Tom Disch, published in December 1965, in the mail early in February, because I am an SFWA member.

I am not going to tell you much about GENOCIDES. I'll save the analytical discussion for the almost inevitable hard-cover edition some hard-headed publisher will eventually put out. Right now, I'd rather leave you to enjoy the story the way I did, without knowing too much in advance. Suffice it then—

This is a *different* book about alien 'invaders' of Earth. The reac-

[1] THE GENOCIDES, Thomas M. Disch; Berkley, F 1170, 1965; 143 pp; 50¢

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

tions of the survivors of the first 'attacks' are presented with a compassion exceeded only by the clarity of the author's perceptions. This applies not only to the behavior of the survivors, but to the selection of them: survival in crisis is not (as so many s-f authors seem to think) a random factor. The circumstances of life after the 'conquest,' and the adjustments of various individuals to those circumstances, are handled with both insight and inner consistency. Disch is not writing about how it *ought* to be; he is stating, clearly and convincingly, how, in a given situation, it *would* be.

This alone would make the book, in the current dearth of thinking-man's novels, worth reading. But there is more.

Without twisting the behavior of his characters to conform to his own preconceptions of right-and-wrong, the author does manage to say a great deal about his concepts of morality, especially as applied to the nature of survival and the struggle for existence. But, as with most good fiction, it is not until the second time through that you stop to reflect on the philosophy; the first time you are too absorbed by the narrative and the personalities.

Personalities, I said, not 'characters.' There are people in this book I will not forget for a long time.

Finally, the book is *written*. There is an occasional small clumsiness or unnecessary cuteness or cleverness in the prose—but for an author whose first work was published less than four years ago, those spots are very occasional indeed, and against them are to be weighed such passages as these:

There was in these forests a strange, unwholesome solitude, a solitude more profound than adolescence, more unremitting than prison. It seemed, in a way, despite its green, flourishing growth, dead. Perhaps it was because there was no sound. The great leaves overhead were too heavy and too rigid in structure to be stirred by anything but gale winds. Most of the birds had died . . .

(Anderson, leader of the settlement, and his son, Buddy, are tracking through this forest on the trail of the community's vital herd of cows, stampeded by their only bull, and with Anderson's youngest son in futile attendance.)

The smell had become very strong; then at a turn in the path, they found the twelve carcasses. They had been incinerated to ash, but the outlines were clear enough to indicate which had been Studs. There was also a smaller patch of ash near them on the path.

"How—" Buddy began. But he really meant what, *or even* who, *something that his father was quicker to understand.*

"Jimmie!" the old man screamed, enraged, and he buried

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

his hands in the smaller pile of still-smoking ashes.

Buddy turned his eyes away, for too great sorrow is like drunkenness: it was not fitting that he should see his father then.

There's not even any meat left, *he thought, looking at the other carcasses.* Nothing but ashes.

Or the two very different characters, city-folk, swapping hysterically clever repartee as they watch their city burn. They keep their cool until the First American Bank begins to go: —

They had lived these last years in the safe deposit vault in the basement . . . Their precious stores of scavenged cans and jars were still locked in the safe deposit boxes, and the canary was probably in his cage in the corner . . .

Jackie was crying real tears.

"Sad?" he asked.

"Oh, not sad. Just a little déracinée. And annoyed with myself because I don't understand it." She snuffled loudly, and the tears were all gone. "It's so horribly like what they used to call an Act of God. As though God were the source of everything unreasonable. I like to know the reason for things." Then, after a pause: "Perhaps it was the termites?"

"The termites!" He looked at her unbelievingly, and her cheek began to show its telltale dimple . . .

(The city begins to burn out.)

Here and there, scuttling about the rubble, the incendiary mechanisms could be glimpsed attending their business. At this remove they seemed really quite innocuous. They reminded Jackie of nothing so much as of Volkswagens of the early Fifties, when all Volkswagens seemed to be grey . . .

"Well, goodbye, Western Civilization," Jackie said, waving at the bright inferno, unafraid. For how can one be afraid of Volkswagens?

It is always a mistake to offer samplings like these; one sample leads to another, and to do the variety of the book justice, one has to include yet another. There is no space here for that. Just go buy the book—if you can find it. Certainly it is the best reading bargain you're likely to get for some time: a literate, perceptive novel, none of which you have read before in short story form or botched serial or 'one-shot' version in the magazine (and honest science-fiction besides).

And it may be something of an investment, too, if (like many s-f readers) you have a bit of collector's blood: the first edition of the first novel of a young writer whose name will probably be better known outside s-f in a few years than it is inside the field now—assuming he finds a way to get his books not just published but read.

Just now, he is without doubt

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

one of the two really bright new lights on the American s-f scene. (I have in mind Roger Zelazny, whose first novel is about due, I understand, from Ace; both writers began publishing in Cele Lolli's *Fantastic* within a few months of each other in 1962.)

Meantime, I have on hand another first novel, equally exciting in a very different way. Actually it is difficult to think of FLOWERS FOR ALGERNON[2] as a "first novel," nor is it so in any but the technical sense. That is, it is only half-new, and one has small reason by now to expect it to be followed by more. The book is an isolated event, rather than an early milestone on the path of a writer—but a singular and significant event on several counts. In ascending order of importance:

Here is the proof that a first-rate novelette *can* be turned into an equally good novel; all it requires, I suspect, is that the author has something more to say on the subject, and has retained his full interest in saying it. Perhaps the very fact (or what I believe to be fact) that Danny Keyes, for all his literary skill, is not essentially "a writer," but a teacher (scholar? philosopher? preacher?) who happens to be exceptionally gifted in communication is precisely what made this possible. Keyes published four or five stories in the late fifties; all were well executed and thought-provoking; "Algernon" alone (*F&SF*, April, 1959) contained that special quality—what does one call it? How do *you* think of it? *Excellence? Excitement? Creativity? Art?* Perhaps just: "Algernon" alone was a *memorable* story. He may yet do more fiction; but to date it would seem that this was the story he had to tell. The first time around, he wrote the essential parts; now here it is complete.

Next, on the matter of its publication: here is a first book by a writer unknown, for all practical purposes, outside s-f. There is hardly a reader inside the field who is not familiar with either the author's name or the story title by now (*F&SF*'s "Best", Ninth Series, 1959; my own "SF," Fifth Annual, 1960; Asimov's "Hugo Winners," 1962; all three in paperback more recently). Harcourt Brace & World—perhaps because they do not have "a science fiction line" and have not acquired some of the publishing preconceptions—are to be loudly applauded for having done the obvious and logical thing: they have wrapped the book in a quiet, tasteful, and appropriate jacket and described the story on the flap with neither apology for, nor repudiation of, "sci-

[2]FLOWERS FOR ALGERNON, Daniel Keyes; Harcourt Brace & World, 1966; 274 pp.; $4.95

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ence fiction"; there is no need for a label to tell s-f readers what this book is, and there is no label or other indication of second-class publishing citizenship to frighten off the non-habituated. (But they *did* get prompt advance copies out to specialty review sources; and I must apologize here, as I approach my final point, for not having reviewed this a month earlier.)

The fact is, when I got the book, I didn't want to read it. I remembered the story too well, and I did not want to read a padded-out, watered-down version. Unfortunately, the opening page supported this sad expectation; and now that I have read it all—without putting it down, once I got started—I think the only real criticism I would make concerns some of the changes on the opening and closing pages.

The impact of the original story rested primarily in the author's extraordinary—perhaps unique—success in conveying an identifiable-and-identifiable-*with* subjective portrait of a subnormal intelligence. Charlie Gordon was a moron, and he was also a man; the reader could accept him as a fellow-human, share his fears and hopes and desperate needs. (Sturgeon has occasionally come close to accomplishing the same thing for me, but never so completely; offhand, I cannot think of another writer who has even come near it.) And as a fellow-writer, I remember admiring the author's restraint in the later part of the story almost as much as his earlier achievement: he had sense enough *not* to try to do the same thing for Charlie's 'superman' phase, I thought.

Well, now he has done just that; he has taken Charlie through intellectual, emotional, social, and sexual discoveries, and done it successfully. The technique is still one of restraint, and it is perhaps the only available technique for conveying an insight into the potentialities of a higher order of intelligence than that of either author or reader. (Sturgeon, again—in "Maturity," specifically—came close to accomplishing this; in the hundreds of intellectual-superman stories I have read, very few others have come anywhere near the mark: some parts of Shiras' IN HIDING perhaps; an occasional spot in Clifton's short stories; the muted ending of ODD JOHN . . .) Here, I think it is less the technique (the first-person "Progress Report" method of the original story, assisted by occasional reminders, like: "Strauss again brought up my need to speak and write simply and directly so that people will understand me. He reminds me that language is sometimes a barrier instead of a pathway. Ironic to find myself on the other side of the intellectual fence."), than the feeling that the projected shadow of a giant in the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"simply" written diary is *real:* that somehow the author has managed to discern the actual shape of—if not the giant himself, then —the shadow, at least.

The novel is fully as remarkable an accomplishment as was the original story. I am sorry to have to include even my one small quibble—that some of the revisions in the very first and very last *progris riports* seemed to me to detract from, rather than add to, the original image of Charlie. Perhaps it is only that the paragraphs are longer; there is a bit more continuity of thought; Charlie seems to observe or understand more of *other* people's reactions. Or, perhaps, it is just that I do not want anything to change in my own almost personal vivid recollection of Charlie Gordon . . .

—JUDITH MERRIL

RULERS OF MEN, ed. **Hans Stefan Santesson,** Pyramid, 50¢, 166 pp. Ten baroque sf tales, five from his Fantastic Universe, one from his Saint, all reflecting Santesson's offbeat and somewhat quaint yet cultivated tastes. Randall Garrett's novelette "The Eyes Have It," a fantasia which emphasizes the enduring fascination of a male figure in Elizabethan costume (say) sporting a wristwatch or holstered six-shooter. Robert Bloch's "A Way of Life," memorable in-group tale of fans, fun, and good feeling. Also Leiber, Clarke, de Camp, de Ford, Wenzell Brown, Bertram Chandler, Harry Harrison, and Edward D. Hoch.

THE UNFRIENDLY FUTURE, ed. **Tom Boardman Jr.,** Four Square, 3s/6p, 167 pp. An odd and interesting mixture of realistic and eerie sf. Former: Mack Reynolds' "Russkies Go Home," a *charming* future in which the Cold and Hot Wars are reduced to an economic battle of tourism between the West, Russia, and China; Harry Harrison's "Rescue Operation," in which an extraterrestrial falling into the *Adriatic* and dying in a *Jugoslavian* bathtub makes all the difference and interest; these two guys have been doing a lot to try to pull the world together. Latter (eerie): Will Worthington's "The Food Goes in the Top"—gray senselessness of urban life; Brian Aldiss' "Danger: Religion!"—also, I suggest, "Reader, Watch Out: 10,000 reality matrixes!" plus Terry Pratchett's "The Hades Business" (like it sounds). In between: Jay Williams' "The Seed of Violence," one of those intricate, offbeat sf tales that would probably (and undeservedly) never got printed except for Santesson's *Fantastic Universe* abovementioned.

FIVE UNEARTHLY VISIONS, ed. **Groff Conklin,** Gold Medal, 50¢, 169 pp. These are all solid, long novelas, well-aged (nine years or more), and deeply moving.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Stamped Caution," by Raymond Z. Gallun—Mars probes well forseen 13 years ago; "Dio," by Damon Knight; "Shadow World," by Clifford Simak; "Conditionally Human," by Walter M. Miller Jr., a tale about the hunger for offspring that tears at the heart. Finally, although my pet abomination is the tale of the fiendish extraterrestrial genius outsmarted and blasted down by solid courageous police-work, I can't get mad at Eric Frank Russell's "Legwork," simply because it is well done and suspenseful.

YET MORE PENGUIN SCIENCE FICTION, ed. **Brian W. Aldiss**, Penguin, 3s/6p, 196 pp. This excellent anthology (most wordage for the money I've yet seen) is built around a core of "hard" sf stories—highly imaginative tales bastioned by a wealth of technical fact: Blish's "Common Time," Brunner's "The Windows of Heaven," Clarke's "Before Eden," H. B. Fyfe's "Protected Species," Bertram Chandler's "The Cage," Damon Knight's "The Country of the Kind," and "I Made You"—Walt Miller's magnificent yarn of a wounded, Panzer-division-strong war-robot, which tramps the moon, refusing to be demobilized and shooting down his creators. It is instructive to contrast this story with another here: van Vogt's "Fulfillment"—a science-melodrama of the battle between two rival computers to control the world. Van Vogt imagines himself to be a giant electronic brain—which also can assume human form—and takes off free-wheelingly; Miller puts the reader emotionally inside the war-robot, but is far stricter about the latter's technical limitations. With a greater element of fantasy, yet still a deep respect for human reality: Cogswell's "The Wall Around the World," Porges' "The Rescuer," Tenn's "Eastward Ho!" and Kornbluth's "MS Found in a Chinese Fortune Cookie."

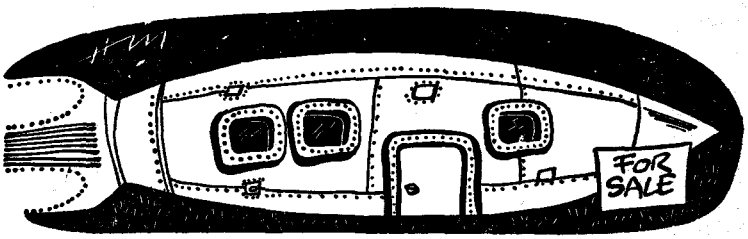
SPECTRUM IV, ed. **Kingsley Amis & Robert Conquest**, Harcourt, Brace & World, $4.50, 310 pp. Some "hard" sf in this fine anthology too: Hal Clement's "Hot Planet" and "The Great Nebraska Sea" by Allan Danzig; I'd add Kornbluth's "The Marching Morons" except for its outrageous assumption that it would be easier to blast five billion people off the earth in rocket ships than sterilize them; only K's masterful sardonic prose could mask such nonsense. Similar: "The Sellers of the Dream," except that John Jakes' colorful writing isn't yet up to K's. Most of the rest are science-fantasy: Boucher's viable "Barrier" with its matchless treatment of the evolution of languages and of time-travel paradoxes; others by Christopher Anvil, John Brunner, Howard Fast, John Wyndham, Cordwainer Smith, Ron Goulart,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Damon Knight, and Wayland Young. Leiber's "The Secret Songs" is a realistic tale of fantastic inner lives.

THE PSEUDO-PEOPLE, ed. William F. Nolan, Sherbourne Press, $4.50, 246 pp. Fourteen previously un-anthologized android stories, five of them originals—from Kuttner's "Those Among Us" to Frank Anmar's "The Fasterfaster Affair," a tale of a James Bond android yclept Jamesten, one of the originals; also humanoid-robot stories by Bradbury, Shelly Lowenkopf, Chad Oliver, Asimov, James Causey, Charles E. Fritch, Dennis Etchison, Richard Matheson, Goulart, Robert F. Young, Beaumont, and Nolan. The book's subordinate material is encyclopedic: preface, introduction, a biographical sketch for each story, and even a bibliography of all robot or android stories in collections and anthologies—including four all-robot anthologies. By the time he had finished this fifth one, this reviewer felt a bit harried and oppressed by the foam-rubber and electric-battery people.

—FRITZ LEIBER



CHANGING YOUR ADDRESS?

The Magazine of FANTASY and SCIENCE FICTION will follow you anywhere providing you let us know six weeks in advance. Please be sure to give us your old address as well as the new one, and be sure to add the ZIP number. (If convenient, send the address label from the wrapper of the next copy of F&SF you receive.)

MERCURY PUBLICATIONS
Subscription Service
347 East 53 Street
New York, N. Y. 10022

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

One usually associates emotional penalties with love, rather than legal ones. However, there is no doubt that the latter can apply at times, as with our own laws relating to fornication or miscegenation. No matter what the setting, there is always a good story to be written about those who love without social sanction, and Doris Buck has written one.

THE LITTLE BLUE WEEDS OF SPRING

by Doris Pitkin Buck

I'm not a coward, SHE TOLD HERself, looking down the long avenue. On either side the crowd was cordoned off. Nets were stretched overhead to prevent onlookers from fluttering up to get a better view of the woman without wings—the crazy woman. *That's what they think I am. Crazy. I'm un-unrepentant. That makes me criminal.*

The soft violet rays of their sun in its dust cloud lit her from hair to instep. It showed distinctly her long arms rigid at her sides. They felt indecent. She knew the winged crowd wondered if she could use them properly. But what passed through her mind was concealed by her frozen face, even when someone shrilled, "She still has her woman's body. Like us, except—" The rest was lost.

"Look, her face! Human! The slut! How dare she look human like us?" "Because she's crazy."

I can cry later. If the judges let me live, I have years on years to remember what we did. In her picture-thinking she saw Hagen, his pinions yellow as sunset, swooping down to caress her blue plumage. Before her for yet another

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

time glowed his glorious human face, his well-muscled body and shapely legs. She saw pinions that distinguished their race from any human or humanoid species in nearby star groups—gigantic wings lovelier than arms, growing from Hagen's shoulders and reaching to his ankles. She remembered how immensely powerful Hagen's were, as were the single tentacles that hung down on either side of his throat.

She knew the people would jeer her, looking so strange. "Wave your arms! Let's see you—Crazy!" Their pinions beat in rhythm to their words.

Could she hide this transformation, part of her punishment, under a mantle the color of her lost plumage? If she stood with her clan, would they accept her? Perhaps? Would she be alive to be accepted?

The jeers rose in volume: men's laughter under the shrillness of women and the high almost whistling taunts from children. She had braced herself for this while she lay in the hospital, unable to turn over. No one came to her niche except doctors, their pinions folded tight to their bodies while their suction-disked tentacles manipulated her, or palped the wounds they had made on her shoulder blades and sides. She was vaguely conscious of strange creatures, consulting physicians from distant planets, learned in all the possibilities of bio-change: lengthening of muscle tissue, shortening and thickening of bone. They probed. They grafted. They changed her as a woman, sewing, changes a dress.

Later, when her wounds began to heal, familiar doctors tested the long muscles in her arms, flexed her elbows, her wrists, her fingers. They made her grasp objects, however awkwardly. After they saw progress, they amputated the tentacles on each side of her collar bone. No one ever spoke to her. The last doctors worked over her scars till new flesh had grown.

She heard a child shrill, "Mother, did they cut her wings off?"

"Yes."

"Why? When they cut her wings off, it hurt, didn't it?"

"Hush."

"Did it hurt a long, long time?"

"Hush."

"Mother, where are her feathers now?"

"Hush."

The street crowd rumbled, in front, behind. "Kill her, even if she's crazy. Kill her." She made herself look straight ahead. A shard from somewhere struck her, glancing off. She gritted her teeth. She felt herself get hot even to the soles of her feet. Rivulets of sweat coursed down her face. Afterward, though sunlight had begun to scorch the newly formed skin on her arms, she started to feel deadly cold.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Her feet ached. She had walked at least a mile, never once able to skim above the ground. Twice people tried to break through the ropes. She almost wished they had.

The judge's tribunal, built of wood and set over the riven stone of the plaza, loomed nearer. She was accustomed now to the ocean-sound of the crowd. Her feet had ached so long that she expected protests from her light bones as she walked. On and on. She hardly cared what would happen. She would care later. Now the future seemed meaningless. Sweat ran into her eyes. She never thought of lifting her hand to wipe it away.

At last she stood before the judge's elevated seat. High dignitaries sat at the sides of the square, ranged according to plumage color, beginning with that of her own clan: spectrum blue. Their eyes were the stoniest. She saw rubies, olives, dawn pinks, blacks, yellows. She saw purples, russets, greens in three tones; wings of cinnebar, wings of turquoise, wings of indigo—all sixteen hues that made up their survival pattern. She had seen them contrasted in great blocks as they flew from Aesta, the northern summer city, to Lterahzltran, the southern summer city. At the dances she had seen ribbons of viridian threaded through rings of pearl and circles of umber.

The crowd was suddenly still as the judge's voice came down to her, impersonal as the carved letters of an inscription. "You who are mad, you who have been judged for a crime against our survival design, you were once one with our way of life. You were once one of our great dancers, leading the movement from earth rhythms into the blaze of flight while the great pinions unfurled, flashing by one another as the past moment became an underlay of color mind-blended with newer color until time itself grew into a pattern of hue and motion.

"For the delights you have given us, we judge you in mercy. But you knew how for thousands of years on thousands we have bred plumage tints not only to give our eyes the utmost in beauty but to dismay our enemies crawling from the sea to take over our two cities, our pools and cool houses. We only know we daunt them when we rise in bands of clear color against the sky. They retreat.

"For this our breeding is rigidly controlled. Even seasonal light affects the tint of a newborn wing. Groups mate always with their own wing color, in the two tenderest days of our brief spring. You alone, in centuries, have broken out of the mating glory. You seduced Hagen, a male of one of the yellow groups. Together you both dallied through the whole of a long summer, not caring that your offspring might be born in winter. You both knew what you did.

"Our births have always been

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

few. We cannot afford the luxury of irregular offspring."

The crowd started to mutter.

"If others followed your example, loving in season and out, loving anyone on whom their eyes lit, our race might die. For this reason we have made an example of you."

The judge's pearl-toned wings were about him like a robe. She only half saw them. Ever since he mentioned Hagen's name, her lover lay before her, his yellow pinions vivid against grey rocks in a valley where they thought they would be hidden. She saw above Hagen in the sky the ancient, almost forgotten vengeance formation of the yellow clan. They stoned him to death in a high alpine gorge.

She had forgotten everything about her till the judge's voice cut through.

"And now, which penalty is your choice?"

He paused. The crowd filled the pause with hissing.

She looked straight forward with her faroff eyes. The judge understood: She was lost in her world of yesterday.

He repeated, "You may stay in Aesta all the winter, with others who are outcasts, you—the outcast among outcasts—soil-bound."

A rustling went through the crowd as these repeated words passed again from mouth to mouth. Everyone knew how the Probationers kept Aesta, with its streets and houses of riven stone, from breaking apart in the long cold. They knew how the glaciers crept almost to the houses, knew the legends of long icicles, thick as tree trunks, that grew a foot a day till they formed columns of ice between drifts of snow and the whiteness of the eaves. Each summer, when the people flew back, guiding themselves by the constellations and mountain summits, they found skillfully repaired cracks in the walls of the houses.

She thought of winter, interminable winter. What would stand between her and horror? Between her and the high valley, the wings arrowing down in fury while she shrank into her hiding place? Would it be with her for her lifespan? *No! No! No!* she cried silently; yet she could not bring herself to face the alternative as the judge told her,

"Or you may choose exile."

A shiver passed from wing to wing.

The judge spoke. "The High Court remembers the beauty of your dancing."

She heard this. She heard too an undercurrent of angry sound. Then silence. She said to the judge with cool defiance, "I choose exile."

The crowd sucked in its breath. A gasp of terror. A dread of new darknesses pierced by unfamiliar stars, of alien season-rhythms, of men or creatures they could not understand. They thought her

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

strange and rashly brave. She alone knew she was a coward, afraid of memories.

Carola stretched out on the hacienda bed, her feet tired after the morning's walk to the ruins. She looked at the sky through the unscreened window, the vibrantly blue sky. Suddenly contempt of her soil-bound feet brought her half upright, fists clenched.

This passed. She sank back on her pillow. The sky was beautiful, like rare enamel. A plane droned across it, noisily but effectively. Carola wondered in a drowse what had come over her.

She thought of what everyone had told her—that a honeymoon was all kinds of ecstasy. She frowned. But at least Roger, who was attentive like a bird courting in spring, was completely fascinated by her way of touching life with the tips of her fingers, brushing it ever so delicately—as a swallow, skimming low, might ripple a pool. Carola thought of herself as at least half bird.

She was glad she had insisted on bringing Roger's small children with them. Everyone imagined she and Roger had been married at least five years. The children had brought the puppy. The puppy and Carola were really friends. The children were still asleep in an adjoining room, and the native girl who cared for them every afternoon had arrived.

Carola hoped for a thunderstorm. Heat always made her sick. The tropics oppressed her. She herself was unsure why flowering trees seemed against nature, as if flowers should only grow in meadows. She was full of ideas people called crazy, like wanting the sky three times as full of stars.

She heard Roger's feet on the tiled floor outside. Her first reaction was to hope he wouldn't throw himself beside her and want to make love. She loathed making love on a bed.

Roger had found a new shop, less than a mile from the hacienda and the ruins. He offered to take her in the car; she had trouble with her arches when she walked far. Carola, touched, tried to think of some way to show gratitude.

In the shop, Roger enjoyed himself picking out very small tortoiseshell rings for her, and inlaid combs. He had just put by a turquoise pendant when the Indian who ran the place came up to Roger, his voice low.

"I show the senora something very fine. Pretty feather."

Carola was busy over a pile of textiles. She did not hear. The Indian reached behind a counter, stooped, and drew out a long plume, spectrum blue.

"Hold it," Roger said. "Put it back."

The Indian persisted. "Soft. Pretty. The senora like, no?"

Roger shook his head.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Carola was still sorting embroideries.

"Put it back." Roger added under his breath, "The senora feels very strongly about killing birds."

The Indian looked reluctant. In his slow hand the feather lingered near Carola.

She looked up. She breathed, "It's beautiful, beautiful."

"I have many." The man reached under the counter for a box. He dumped feathers before her. A few danced a moment in an updraft of air, then settled. Long powerful feathers covered the counter, short feathers, feathers like down. Carola moved to them quickly, thrusting her hands among them, holding that glory up to her matching eyes. Her almost masklike face glowed and came alive.

Suddenly she wept. At first they were soft tears, like rain in spring. Lost memories beat through her brain. She saw Hagen dead in the upland gorge, his blood trickling into a little stream scarcely wider than her hand. She wondered if some of her had been seeing it for days.

She had wanted to fly to Hagen, to protect him as long as she had life, to put her body between his body and the flying shards. But she had not moved. She had trembled, hidden in a fissure of grey rock, her long pinions wrapped about her flesh.

She could not have helped her lover. Hagen was doomed. Yet she felt guilty. She was a coward. She had not gone to her love. For the first time she understood herself. She felt she deserved her punishment.

Something in her mind cleared. She wept as if the world were ending. She sobbed. Her body shook from shoulder to hip. Her knees hardly held her up. She had to lean both hands on the counter to steady herself, while the sobs almost grew into wretching. Feathers she had been holding drifted down, making a little pile about her feet.

She moved one hand from the counter. Still trembling, she grasped another handful. She turned to Roger. She saw the steps in a great choreographic design that was her grief for Hagen. "I want them all. All. Every feather."

"Darling," he said, "it won't bring the bird back to life."

She remembered everything: the surgeon's knives, the pacing toward the judge, the return to the hospital, the indoctrination for Earth which she was for awhile to forget, finally the narco-medics and peace. Sobbing, she fought for her feathers, trying to sweep them into the box and to gather the whole box in her arms. She flung herself over them while Roger stroked her shuddering body, trying in vain to calm her.

The Indian wrapped up Roger's tortoiseshell jewelry and the pendant. "You take for the senora. You go."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Roger pulled Carola away from the feathers, holding his small wife firmly.

"Darling, you mustn't be so tender-hearted. Everything has to die. Get control of yourself, sweetheart. The walk among the ruins, under that hot sun, was too much for you. You sit outside on a bench." He carried her from the shop into the cooler air and set her down, facing away from everything inside. In silence he stroked her shoulders rhythmically. She still shuddered, but no longer convulsively. "I'm going to get the car. I'll have you back at the hacienda in no time. I'll bring supper to your room myself."

When Roger was out of sight, Carola rose. Her husband had been right. Nothing could bring life to any dead wings. The judge had spared her nothing. She might have known.

With her eyes hardly seeing the summer richness of the trees, with her nostrils stopped to the heavy perfumes, she walked to the ruins like one half dead. In as little as a quarter of an hour darkness would have blanketed everything. She would grope her way up the most ruinous of the temples, the crumbling one where the stones at the back had been taken away and there was a sheer drop from the summit to the hardbaked ground. She would climb up while there was still a little light. Then step into air. After, there would be peace. Peace, such as the narcomedics had given her.

Far off, she thought she heard the puppy. Looking at the ancient steps, planning her ascent from broken stone to dilapidated ledge as if she were a mountain climber, she sent the animal a small farewell. *Fare well,* she meant it, *fare better than I have, Earth-creature.*

Twilight deepened. But she had time to get to the top.

From somewhere at her left came a sharp crash of stone, a momentary rumble, then a howl. The howl died too quickly, changing to a whimper. It was unexpectedly terrifying.

Carola found herself stumbling toward it, making her way more by touch than by sight. She clutched a retaining wall. A few rocks loosened. She hurried to avoid being hit. She called. The whimper answered. Close.

She was on her knees, touching a body sticky with blood. The puppy was wedged in a crack.

She began to call. Very loud, very shrill. She tried to move the stones. They were too heavy. She went on calling.

She called some time before an answer came, shrill as her own call. She recognized the children's voices. To her relief she saw a bobbing light.

Carola and the children got the puppy loose, while they called him special pet names to which he did not try to respond.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"His leg's broken. We'll get him to a doctor. He's alive. We'll get him to a doctor tonight. He'll be all right," she told them.

She knew she was not going to kill herself.

"Yes, wings," she told Roger's grandchildren. "Everyone on that planet has wings like a bird, not arms."

"Are they big like ostriches?" the grandson asked.

"Rather small, my dear."

"You're small."

"I'd be tall there. Stately."

"I like you the way you are. I wouldn't change you the tiniest," one of the girls declared loyally. She ran a finger along Carola's wrinkles. "Go on with the story, grandmother. Do they live on seeds?"

"Yes, they fly up and catch them in the air. Little fruits like maple keys, only soft like cherries, blow about too in their high winds. And their lovely feathers never change color."

One child opened her eyes wide. Her eyes said, "They were angels."

"No, only different from us."

"Were they bad sometimes?"

Carola looked away. "That's another story. This one is about a little girl," she hugged the smallest child, "who couldn't keep up with the flock and got lost on the way to the northern summer city."

They nestled about her. Carola drew the four close to her.

"That day the wind was so strong it blew great clouds of snow off the mountain slopes. It powdered the upper air with diamonds."

They listened, breathless.

Carola looked out of her window open to the spring. Faint scents of life reviving came to her like a green perfume. Even the sidewalk, which she usually resented, was lively with leafy stems pushing through cracks. She noticed more cracks than last year, more mitigation.

She saw her stepdaughters coming in her direction. Knowing them well, she realized they were annoyed. Though they had been grateful about the puppy, years ago, she and they never saw eye to eye.

Today she hoped nothing would dilute the spring. For a split second, she remembered a planet's long orbit, stretched out somewhat like a comet's—and a spring so brief it was an event, not a season.

What would distract two quarrelsome women? She hurried from the room and returned with cakes. She loved to make them, chiefly because she liked to put in tasty seeds, long and slim and curved. Carola found seeds beguiling.

The distraction failed to distract. They started, "Carola, do something about the weeds."

"In a few days they'll have disappeared. They're the—oh the signature of earliest spring. I won't do a thing." They had failed to notice

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

those minute cups the color of her eyes.

They shook their heads at her, thinking alike as always. "Father'd hate all the mess, Carola. He'd loathe it."

"If he were here now, I'd pull out every last weed. But he isn't and I like them."

"Like that untidiness! Carola dear, think."

Carola was deaf to their variations on their arguments; what could they know about streets of granite? The blocks were laid together with such skill only the savagery of winter with its avalanches could break them. Carola suggested, "Sidewalks of stone would be handsome."

They brushed this aside. "Carola dear, you're stalling. Even you must realize those mats of leaves are awful."

How could she tell women like that about her blue flowers, almost as evanescent as sapphire foam on a tinted ocean they would never see? She had been so excited, the first time she leaned over the tangle of stems, to look at the infinitesimal heart of gold from which white lines finer than hairs curved out to the rim. In days the blue would be gone, in weeks no one could even find the green mat over which they had spread in an iridescence of their own.

They suggested, "Take a trip, and we'll clean the place up for you."

She said, surpised at her own retort, "Maybe I shall take a trip. Leaving the children would be hard, though."

They patted her shoulders. It did not bother her at all now.

She went out with them to the gate. "Enjoy your spring." She wanted to give it to them like a gift —this blessing of a planet where seasons were of equal length.

The eyes of one woman sought the eyes of the other. Carola was not certain whether she heard real words. "She's too old now to be really interested in anything."

Wrinkles, they were part of their world, but her life-span was more than four of theirs. She was younger than they. They had overlooked her agility—how swiftly and surely her feet moved over slopes in the hills. She was young enough to be a seed collector on her planet, to harvest precious globes and disks and small fleshy shapes; so that nothing would be left to chance, nothing lost. She must show the grandchildren how to collect seeds that followed those blue cups—tiara shapes so small a thousand would not make a handful.

She stood looking at them. That was when she found the blue feather; she did not know from whose wing. For her around that feather mountains sprang from their snowfields, eternal reminders of relentless nature. Her throat tightened. How could anyone know spring who had enough of it to waste?

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The feather lay among the flowers, its tip pointing like an arrow to the wood beyond the town.

A signal, an obscure directive. She felt ready to obey. But she allowed herself to shudder a little since no one was there to see. She knew she had never been too brave.

The signal could mean death, on Earth, for the woman secretly superior when she thought of a life-span of centuries. Or perhaps she would stand again, feathered, unwrinkled on a globe with a name so foreign no one on Earth could say it, though they would understand its translation: Planet of Brief Spring. She might know the swift chromatic dance again. For a second, Carola felt the lift of currents in air. She was a woman of two elements.

She hardly expected her punishment to be stiffened. It might even be lightened. Her fingers tattooed nervously against her thighs.

She went into the house that had been hers and Roger's. She sat down. She composed her face in case anyone came. It grew like her frozen face on that last march in a world unlike Earth.

She waited till evening. Before she went out, she put on the tortoiseshell rings Roger had given her, the combs, the pendant. She stepped outside and lifted the feather from its blue and green mat. Holding it in her hand, she walked toward the wood, never losing direction.

She stopped as soon as she heard feet pattering behind her. She let them catch up. Then quietly she took off Roger's jewelry and handed the pieces to her granddaughters. She had on a ring of silver and onyx that would suit either a man or a woman. She slipped it on her grandson's smallest finger.

"Go home now," she said, nothing more.

"We don't want to. We want to go with you."

She returned completely to grandmotherhood. "Did you slip out of bed?" She sounded as near stern as she ever got.

"But we saw you leaving. Oh grandmother, please." They all chorused on the *please,* holding the vowel. They pranced. They capered. The *pleases* grew almost like mews.

"Darlings, go back to bed. Go back and have wonderful dreams all night long." She bent down, kissing each smooth forehead, but hurrying on without a kiss in return.

They seemed to fade away, sensing a crisis. When she got to the wood, they were waiting for her. She let them stay, wondering how they had doubled round through the thickets to meet her.

They saw the new star before she did, although she expected it. Briefly it shone golden in heaven, releasing itself from something vaster that was hardly to be made out in the bluish faintness of

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Earthshine. Then the star tangled where the highest twigs, still leafless, made a mesh against the sky. The wood grew light, then lighter. And suddenly skimming toward them was a man with wings that shimmered like pearls.

One of the children whispered, "He's an angel."

"No," he answered, "only different."

They went straight to him, without fear. Somehow he swept up the smallest girl and held her against his shoulder, where his feathers were smoother than anything she had ever stroked.

He said, the way uncles and cousins always said to her, while he touched her cheek with his, as they did, "Be my little girl."

She shook her head vigorously.

"I'm a judge. I can decree you a beautiful pair of wings."

She squirmed, still shaking her head.

"I'll give you blue wings, and your brother—that's right?—wings just like them."

She put her small hand over his mouth. He was like Uncle Bill with his pony cart. She gave a sudden leap. She was on the ground. "We're all staying with grandmother."

"Perhaps she is coming with me."

"He *is* an angel," one of the girls whispered with awe. "That's what angels do—come for people."

"You know two ways of loving," he told Carola, and all the songs of morning seemed to be in his voice. "Two ways, the wild one you chose, which is both feared and reverenced on earth. But where people would have understood, you withheld that love. There is also the way of our planet, in which self is forgotten. This is known on earth, and this at last you experience. Choose now, you who have trodden the soil of exile. Return or stay, woman worthy of either world. If you choose to come, you will wake, winged, from a long sleep. That was what the newfound feather meant."

Suddenly they all noticed the feather grandmother carried. They crowded round Carola. She touched their hair with the feather gently, then gathered first one, then another, into her arms. They rested against her, completely easy.

"I'm going to stay. But, but may I have the life-span of Earth?"

"It became yours when you chose." He never said goodbye. Soon there were only the immemorial stars of Earth over the treetops, and grandmother beginning a story as they walked home.

Carola told them, "It's about the same little girl and what fun she had gathering seeds."

"Can we gather seeds?"

"Indeed you may, just the way she did."

"What did she do when she grew up?"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"She became a dancer."

"Once," the boy said, "I looked through a telescope, and then our teacher had us all make up stories about space. But they didn't sound like your stories. You tell real stories, grandmother." There was a long pause before he questioned, "It was real, wasn't it?"

He couldn't see in the dark whether or not Carola nodded. He told her softly, "When I grow up, I'm going to get a rocket. I'm going to find your world and see the dancers." He added, discouragement creeping into his voice, "But I won't grow up for a long time. It'll be twelve whole years from now."

Twelve years, only twelve years. She thought ahead. She could almost hear the years whizzing past like arrows when her grandson played Indian.

Brief. Brief. Brief. No one could clutch time on any world.

She caught the two hands nearest her. "The girl," Carola went on serenely, "was kneeling beside a great big rock. It had kept the winds away from mats of green leaves where the flowers used to be. She held a tiny mat woven of grasses—held it under a seed pod. She shook ripe blue seeds onto it carefully. Oh she was so careful. Those seeds were as precious as flowers."

COMING NEXT MONTH

In THE MANSE OF IUCOUNU, **Jack Vance** brings to a close the saga of Cugel the Clever. Originally charged by Iucounu, The Laughing Magician, to seize for him the magic cusps and return with them from half the dying world away, Cugel has at last completed his epic quest.

Now he plots dire revenge upon the Laughing Magician for the dangers and terrors he was forced to face, and for implanting within his vitals the demon Firx, whose duty was to keep him from deviating from the most direct return path.

Alas, when Cugel returns to the Manse of Iucounu, things are not as they had been before—nor as he might ever have imagined.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Apparently very few stones remain unturned in the F&SF reader's search for extra-curricular literature. Many items are shared with us: some are reprintable, virtually all are interesting and appreciated. This month's F&SF stone-turner award goes to Mr. Fred E. Dickey, who (somewhat appropriately) has uncovered the January 1965 issue of "the usually staid" Bulletin of the Philadelphia Herpetological Society, *from which this short and delightful funny item is reprinted.*

CARE IN CAPTIVITY SERIES: TYRANT LIZARDS TYRANNOSAURUS REX

IN THE COURSE OF A STUDY OF the herpetofauna of central Greenland, I was delighted to uncover a frozen but intact adult specimen of the Tyrant Lizard, *Tyrannosaurus rex.* With the assistance of my partner, Miss Felis Galore, and several thermite grenades furnished under a National Science Foundation grant, we were able to defrost and revive this splendid saurian. In the ensuing weeks we were fortunate in being able to observe the captive behavior and some of the habits of *Tyrannosaurus rex.*

Our specimen was a moderate sized female, approximately 18 feet at the shoulder, and weighed an estimated 14 tons (after defrosting). Housing this rare specimen required some ingenuity. Her cage consisted of a 30 square acre aquarium made of "I" beams and epoxy cemented bathysphere windows twelve feet thick. The aquarium was heated to a constant 90° F. by a surplus nuclear reactor from a previous N.S.F. grant.

One of our first projects involved a scale count to ascertain the validity of our identification. The scale count system described by T. S. Grimley in his *Field Guide to Lizards Seen in Japanese Horror Films* did not prove feasible. As most of you know, Grimley suggested notching each scale with a carbide tipped pneumatic hammer to facilitate counting. Our lizard, however, was a bit on the surly side and would not tolerate close approach. Miss Galore's ingenuity saved the day. Her system utilized a 20 mm antitank gun and armor piercing shells. With careful sighting, she

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

was soon able to mark a series of scales with the scratches left by the ricocheting projectiles. Scale counts were then safely made with the aid of field glasses.

Keeping our *rex* well fed also called for considerable thought. The lizard required about seven tons of protein per day, mostly in the form of fresh meat. At first, we were able to satisfy its nutritional requirements with six or seven Musk-oxen per day, collected in the surrounding plains. However, the digestive system of *T. rex* was apparently incapable of assimilating Musk-ox horns and hooves, and these caused severe indigestion. This was particularly hazardous when the saurian belched, which resulted in the expulsion of horns, hooves, etc., at high velocity. (In fact, the glass walls of its cage were severely damaged by some of this shrapnel.) The problem of proper diet was finally resolved with the help of a local Eskimo tribe, who kindly contributed surplus from their John Birch Honorary Euthanasia Program.

Our second and, unfortunately, last study involved determination of the metabolic temperature fluctuations of *T. rex*. This required internal temperature measurements. Since proper instrumentation was not available through normal channels, it was again necessary to use our own ingenuity. Miss Galore devised a rectal thermometer from the shell and innards of a WW II torpedo. With the aid of a specially armored heavy construction derrick and some deft maneuvering, we were finally able to place the instrument. Our specimen apparently resented the intrusion, bolted sharply and ran headlong into the nuclear cage heater. There was a rather large detonation and, well, all was lost. As lone survivor, I was fortunate in being able to record subsequent events. My most recent paper, *Effects of Radioactive Tyrannosaurus Dust on Aboriginal Eskimos* is now in press.

—BARRY ROTHMAN

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Kenneth Bulmer is a rather well known SF name in England, where he lives "in a tiny village in the blossom belt of Kent"; however he has appeared only once before in F&SF (THE DAY EVERYTHING FELL DOWN, August 1957) in collaboration with Damon Knight. This is his first solo story to appear in these pages, and a truly superior story it is. While its treatment is restrained, its effect is uncommonly strong, and, we should add, grim.

THE ADJUSTED

by Kenneth Bulmer

ON THIS MORNING AS THEY went down to the pens the mild early sunlight gentled with soft radiance the broken brickwork and gaping concrete so that for a mocking moment the labyrinth assumed a semblance of normality. The two men walked delicately along the raised ramparts between the pens looking down through each transparent roof.

"The zoom they've designed on my new cine camera is fantastic—a recommended Best Buy." The elder of the two withdrew his foot sharply as he kicked a protruding stump of ferro-concrete. "What a frightful bore all this is, Rodney!" He spoke pettishly, like a man roused from an absorbing game to attend a broken fuse. "Every time I come here there are less people to care for."

"But we must care, Charles, surely?" The younger man tended to hang a half-body's distance in rear of his companion. "After all . . . Look at the poor darlings! One does try to remember they are human . . ."

Rain had fallen in the night although the morning sky smiled approvingly and oily puddles shimmered spectroscopically from depressions and worn patches in the concrete ramparts. Over the sheathing of the pens, fussily energetic cleaning robots swept and scrubbed and polished until the plastic kindled to invisibility, only vagrant gleams betraying its continued existence. The two men,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Charles and Rodney, walked quickly with loud footfalls like men inspecting the tanks of an aquarium.

"But all these pens are empty, Charles!"

"Here, yes. We like to keep the survivors together. It makes caring for them easier and I think no one would begrudge us that."

"I should think not, Charles! Wendy bought me my new golf clubs yesterday and I can't wait to step on the greens. There's one thing about golf"—he pronounced it goff—"it keeps a fellow in shape."

"True. We shall be surfing next week. Randy Waller has this brand new fibre-glass motor cruiser—a fabulous boat—and we're having a tremendous time together down on the beach. Why don't you try to get away?"

"That's very civil of you, Charles. Very. Wendy would like that. I think even bridge and ponies are beginning to pall."

"Can't overdo a good thing, Rodney, you know what they say —"

A dozen aisles in from the perimeter the two men paused. A refuse robot, its capacious container shut tight, waddled past. Slime trickled from one corner. Rodney wrinkled up his nose and made a noise of disgust. Charles said: "You can never trust these robots to do a decent job. However clever they are and however much care and foresight we put into the programme for them, somehow they manage to foul something up." He made a note on his yellow report. "I'll have that attended to, pronto."

A few paces further on Charles stared down into the membrane spanning the pen roof. He sighed. "A whole family was quartered here the last time I was on duty. Now the pen is empty."

"Poor darlings," said Rodney. "But it was all for the best, even if they could never know that."

Before they reached the next pen, both men were once again in the ritual of discussing their latest possessions and plans. On the tail of: ". . . sweetest little hi-fi on the market with the stereo so bland you don't have to shut your eyes to see the orchestra . . ." they reached the first of the inhabited pens.

The hypno robot stood respectfully to one side, waiting.

Charles checked his worksheet.

"The Robinsons. Ah, yes, I remember them. Grandfather was a skilled capstan man. He's dead now, luckily."

Rodney stared down through the transparent covering that loving robot attention had burnished. "Just the father and mother, three children and the grandmother. I say, Charles!" Rodney stooped, hands on knees. "She looks—I rather think—I really do . . ."

The worksheets fluttered like a benediction as Charles slapped

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

them under his arm decisively. "Quite right, Rodney. You've a quick eye. We'll have to see to her first."

As that train of attention smoothly wended its way to finality Rodney listened to the Robinsons' conversation through the microphone and loudspeaker hookups. Below him the pen showed four square concrete walls frilled here and there with the lace of condensation staining. No covering shielded the concrete floor. The six Robinsons sat on wooden boxes spaced about the area.

Mother Robinson sat with a silly, proud smile on her face. "Now hurry up, children. Your father has a big day ahead of him. It's our anniversary and we're all going on a picnic."

The three children—two boys and a girl—all shrilled into excited clamour like gulls pirouetting beyond a cliff edge. "Where are we going? Whose anniversary? When?"

"Now mind your tongues and eat your breakfasts." Mother Robinson rose from her splintered box and moved towards the sink and tap against the wall. "I've fixed you a special breakfast today—then you can watch tv until your father comes home from work."

"Won't be long, kids." Father Robinson pulled his single sack-like garment around him. "The foreman's a pal. I'm doing a half shift today, two hours."

Mother Robinson lifted the chipped enamel bowls from beside the sink. She held each one under the faucet and filled it with the porridge that spurted out as she turned the tap. "Now, Estelle and you boys—you mind your clothes! I don't want bacon and eggs giving me extra washing." She carried the bowls back on a tray and set one down to each member of the family. "I've put in an extra rasher, so think yourselves lucky."

The younger boy thrust in his spoon and began to slobber the porridge into his mouth. With his mouth full he said: "I only got one egg, Mum! I wannanuvver!"

"Greedy!" But the woman obediently rose and splashed more porridge into the bowl. "Here you are, Alfie. Now hush your tongue and eat up. Look at Bert!"

The older boy had the bowl inverted over his mouth and sucked with a siphoned mouth and loud noises. Porridge dropped to squash stickily onto his box and to add a fresh layer to the dried porridge laminating his garment.

"You can't do better than go to work on an egg," said Father Robinson. "And the bacon has 'Best Quality' stamped right through it. But I'd best be off. Don't want to be late today."

"Take a MidMunch, Dad. You can enjoy that without spoiling your appetite."

The man stood up and walked

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

carefully towards a corner of the pen. He stood facing into the angle of the walls and his body and hands moved occasionally, the bedraggled hem of his clothing knuckling the floor.

"Grandma's quiet this morning, Mum." The remaining Robinsons continued sitting on their boxes, their gruel bowls empty on the harsh floor.

The mother hushed her eldest. "Now you leave your grandma alone, Estelle! She's just having a little nap. Go and watch the telly."

Obediently the three children turned as one to face a blank concrete wall. Mildew grew a roseate whorl. Their faces blanked, smooth and effortlessly becoming tuned receptors. The woman sat humped on her box. A dribble of porridge plopped to the floor.

"My now," she said tut-tuttingly. "Your father's left his Pools behind. The more you invest the better chance you stand. I wonder if I have time to go down to the supermarket? The bargains on the telly last night are worth having. M'mm." Her voice softened and she spoke reflectively to unresponsive ears. "It's going to be a lovely day today. Your Dad's gone to a lot of trouble for this anniversary. I hope the weather keeps fine."

Above her head the roofing spanned clear and unbroken with the morning shadows of Charles and Rodney like bars across the plastic.

The eldest son Bert knuckled his eyes, the swollen joints straining their yellow flesh against his white wire-bristle eyebrows. "Gee! Lookit that rocket! They're gonna shmack right down on Mars if they don't figure out the drive toobes!" His thin body jerked on the raw box. "It's going! It's the commercials!"

"Hey, Mum!" said Estelle, the pendulous flesh of her neck sagging, "It's the commercials. Never mind, Alfie—it'll come back."

The mother glanced across at the mildewed concrete wall, the scrawny neck muscles distending her dessicated flesh, the blued hollows beneath jaw and ear concaving to blackness. The deep pitted lines of her face shifted their alignment as though to express pleasure. She passed one thin hand over the powdery refuse of her hair.

"I think I'll change my make up," she said in a dreamy voice. "I might even go blonde."

"What'd Dad say?"

"You 'tend to your telly, Estelle!"

Above them, Rodney glanced sharply at Charles. Charles nodded perfunctorily. A few aimless clouds yawed across the sky. "I think so, Rodney. I dislike this function of our duty, but at the least, it is a surcease of suffering for one more."

Under Charles' directions the hearse robot unzipped a corner of the roofing and descended. It

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

touched the rhythmically moving figure of Father Robinson on its way towards Grandmother Robinson on her box. The man continued his sequence of movements, mitred into his corner.

"Robots!" exclaimed Charles. "The fool thing nearly knocked him over! And they were prattling about machines taking over from man! The good-for-nothing heaps of electronics!"

"If they weren't machines and therefore incapable of being so, I'd say robots were perverse," Rodney resumed his study of the Robinson family. "And as for that scare about taking over from us—" His smile held contempt.

The hearse robot extended its paps and with a sinewy economy of effort lifted Grandmother Robinson from her box to fold her efficiently into the coffin that had been readied ahead of time. Sunlight silvered along a metal arm. The low-key whirr of motors and a faint taste of oil on the air accompanied the routine procedures. The hearse robot backtracked with Grandmother Robinson folded to its embrace.

"I've given up my Bingo for the anniversary," said Mother Robinson as the hearse robot sidled past her. "So I want you children to behave yourselves. No gallivanting off. If you want ice cream and lollipops you must do as you're told."

Alfie the younger son tugged impatiently at his porridge-stained garment and the dessicated material fluffed into a tear. "I wanna lollipop now!"

"Now look at you, you ungrateful imp!" Mother Robinson did not move from her box. "Tearing your best jacket? You wait 'til your father comes home!"

Alfie cringed back and the stiff hairs over the back of his head crushed down on the grey leathery flesh of his neck. His mother stirred herself reluctantly.

"I'd better get the dishes in the dishwasher." Mother Robinson creakingly collected the bowls and dropped them, one at a time, into the sink. "You tend to your tv."

On the concrete ramparts where now overnight water contracted its pools and haloed its evaporation, the hearse robot clicked past the two men. A shred of Grandma Robinson's coarse garment had caught in the lid of the coffin. Rodney took a step forward until Charles stayed him with a look.

"What difference does it make, Rodney?"

"You're right, of course, Charles. But—the poor dears—it's all they could have expected when their skills were overtaken. I'll feel so much lighter when they are all gone."

Charles beckoned the hypno robot. Multiple lenses probed impersonally downwards. The mocking sound of dynamos rose mincingly up the scale.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Poor Grandma," said Estelle, her pendulous shape sagging the cassock clothing and planed by the severity of the box. "We do miss her so . . ."

"You hardly remember her, Estelle. She died when you and the boys were too small to understand such things."

Father Robinson jerked into motion exactly as though a gear train had meshed in his legs. One moment he was standing angled in his corner; the next he was turned about and shuffling wearily across to slough down on his box.

"You look tired, Dad."

"Two hours—half a shift—they make us work hard for our living. It's all these fancy new automations they're putting in. One day they won't want men to work at all, I shouldn't wonder."

"Oh, Dad! Don't spoil our anniversary."

"They seem happy," said Charles, wiping his face with a tissue. "The robot will dispose of the grandmother in the vats. Time we moved on."

Mother Robinson had returned to her box. The family of five now sat around the area, each on his box. Grandmother Robinson's box had at last fulfilled its function: it held her wizened body now for its last short journey, at once her conveyance and her coffin.

"Just let me check the vitamin and mineral content of the porridge, Charles." Rodney leaned over carefully towards the dials set in the angle where the Robinsons' food pipe branched from the main. "And a robot had better clean off their faucet. It's encrusted with dried porridge."

"Robots!" Charles said disgustedly. He made the necessary note.

The five figures clad in their stained vestments sat quiescently on their coffins in the square confinement of concrete walls. Occasionally they prattled on in lively fashion about the anniversary, their talk peppered with tv and comics and lollipops and bingo and the neighbours' back yard squalor.

Charles and Rodney walked more slowly now, each movement an effort beneath the midday sun, creeping circumspectly around the latticework ramparts.

"The average age stays around the same as the older ones die off and the younger ones age. The Robinsons, for instance, Rodney, must average out around forty-five to fifty."

Rodney halted to catch a breath, a hand pressed to his side. "It gives me the creeps to hear these ancients talking about lollipops and ice creams and buckets and spades. But we couldn't let them breed, the poor darlings, could we?"

The two paused with more frequency now as they pursued their tour of inspection. "You did check the hypno robot, Rodney?" Charles spoke with sharpness.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Of course, Charles! What a question."

"If that robot fails us . . . I've seen pens filled with porridge and pens filled with—never mind. But one family broke the mesmerism when a robot malfunctioned. They acted—it was quite horrible—they acted like demented people. Running about and screaming—it was quite clear to me why that sort never adjusted."

"After all, they don't have our advantage of being adjusted logically. As soon as a rational regime was devised by the computers in statistical analysis of behaviour and the multivariate approach to psychology established our salvation, automation made the poor darlings redundant. But I always think of the essential dignity of the human being—"

"Why, naturally, Rodney! We couldn't have tolerated the mass killing of the redundants and equally we can't support them as they imagine themselves to be supported . . ."

"I'm sure they have a nice time, really—all things considered."

"What they experience has the same validity as though it was really happening."

"Restful, I always think, Charles."

"That's our burden, Rodney. Rest for them; but we have our responsibilities. But what a bore it is!"

"Yes. I shall be glad for my session with the analyst tomorrow. There is where you find true rest. And to think that ordinary men once used to pry into your own psychiatric makeup! They called themselves psychologists but they were really only psychic voyeurs. Now the machines can be perfectly dispassionate. So much more reassuring."

"They used to say conflict was everything; but here we have the conflict between reality and illusion—and, thankfully, it is quite clear that neither can win this insane contest."

"Quite, Charles," said Rodney primly.

The two men passed the last of the inhabited pens with the at-

IT'S CORRECT TO CLIP!

Filling in the coupon on the next page offers the following advantages:

1. **Guaranteed monthly delivery to your door of the best in science fiction and fantasy reading.**
2. **Reduced rate—it's cheaper to subscribe than to buy your copies at the newsstand.**
3. **An essentially unmarred copy of this issue—the coupon is backed up with this box, and its removal does not affect the text of the surrounding material.**

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

tendant robots like cranes perched watchfully on stalky legs above the shimmering-water surface of the transparent sheaths.

"Thank goodness that's over." Charles cautiously descended the slope towards the concrete road curving around the pen area. "However much I feel I am doing my duty to these people, I know I have put in a good day's work. Surfing for me! Relax in the sun! Soon we'll be in the company of the big boys of the world—that's living!"

"That feller we stopped at first —what was his name—Robinson —standing in a corner and twitching for work . . . We do a highly skilled—it makes you—I mean—"

"Now then, Rodney!" Charles hesitated at the road edge, turning his back carefully and tilting his head to look back at Rodney. "That's enough of that! We know our position." His face showed more animation. "I'm pleased with my new car . . . Triple carbs, aly heads, machine balanced, goes like a bomb—"

"She's a beauty, Charles." Rodney finished negotiating the gentle slope, puffing with exertion. "I'm pleased they've cut down on the chrome this year. More elegant—"

"Get in, Rodney. There's a big meal waiting with all the trimmings and my wine man recommended me a niersteiner that slides down like syrup and razor blades—I think you'll like it."

"You always could pick a fine wine, Charles."

Rodney stood beside Charles with an exaggerated motion of his legs. Charles held both hands out in front of him rounding on the empty air.

"I like the feel of the velvet steering ring," he said moving his hands smoothingly. "Adds a spot of class."

The two old men tottered gently away, their porridge textured garments wrapping them like shrouds, across the concrete to their own pens.

Mercury Press, Inc., 347 East 53 Street, New York, N. Y. 10022 F6

Send me The Magazine of FANTASY AND SCIENCE FICTION.

I enclose ☐ $5.00 for one year ☐ $9.00 for two years.

☐ $12.50 for three years.

Name .....
Please print

Address .....

City ..... State ..... Zip #.....

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

MIGRATORY LOCUSTS

by Theodore L. Thomas

IN VARIOUS PARTS OF THE world locusts live and die like many another insect, doing no harm, not much noticed. But every once in awhile something happens. Locusts blossom in vast swarms, spreading across the countryside, eating all green things growing. They leave devastated areas and starvation for people who have to rely on the crops they grow. So it has been of some interest to the scientists to find the reasons for all this.

The migrating locusts were different from the common short-horned grasshoppers that usually lived peacefully in the region; for one thing they were darker in color. No one could tell where the hordes of locusts came from. They weren't even close relatives of the cicada—tree cricket—that was often called a locust. Yet one day the ground would be covered with migrating locusts, and they would start to move.

In 1921 an Englishman touched on the answer. He suggested that the migrating locust was nothing more than the good old short-horned grasshopper gone wild. It took much study to prove him right. Work in the laboratory and in the field has provided some of the information.

For unexplained reasons, grasshoppers begin to multiply abnormally. As they become crowded, they begin to get restless, and they turn darker. Each generation is darker and more restless. They stay out in the sun instead of hiding. They take note of each other instead of remaining loners. The situation worsens until they finally swarm out of their homeland in response to an irresistible urge. The migration may end in the sea or simply peter out, leaving a few familiar, solitary grasshoppers—until the next migration—again caused by the press of population.

Perhaps men ought to pay very close attention to the urge to migrate in this manner, particularly since locusts are not the only migrating animals. Is it possible that men contain deep inside them a latent urge, as yet untapped, to solve their population problems in the same manner? At some future

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

time, when our population reaches, say, two to three times the population density that now exists in China or India, will millions upon millions of human beings gather together in the sun and swarm to the sea in response to a pre-existing biological summons? Perhaps we ought to find out before it is too late.

MEMO TO SECRETARY

Duplicate manuscripts!
But how in Xerox
did the Hindus
triplicate Sanskrit?
Papyrus exasperus!
Pharaoh wants three copies
of hieroglyphs Egyptian
with appropriate inscription.
Did carboned clay tablets
inhabit dark corridors
of Sumerian filing cabinets?
Cuneiform uniform
with two copies please!
One for the wing/ed/itorial bull . . .
one for Xerxes.
Mimeographed bones beating
initialed with the chieftain's scratch
for the next board meeting.
Miss Ogg, send up a copy of that cave wall
and don't abbreviate any personal names,
please.

—PAT DE GRAW

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Population explosion and all, it is very unlikely that there is still a sucker born every minute. The public has gotten wise, so if you've been wondering where the space age Barnums are, they're out searching for genuine talent. Like, for instance, the relentless search of Lou Fontana (International Agent For Rollo's Universal Fantasy Shows, Inc.) for an honest-to-God levitation act, and none of your feeble horizontals to maybe five feet against a phony black drape and hoop passed to and fro to show it's all on the level.

A QUEST FOR UPLIFT

by Len Guttridge

DID YOU EVER KNOW ME TO goof off on a field trip, Rollo? We've been business partners eighteen years, right? And all that time closer than greenbacks in a billfold. So did I ever let you down?

Let you down, Rollo. That's a joke, boy, sure enough. One thing about your buddy ever-laughing Louie, whatever fix he's in he's always good for a gag. Or was. Because he's in a helluva fix right now, pal, and counting on you.

Like we've had an affinity, you and I, ever since you decided to give the carnival biz a shot in the butt by bringing back freak shows. Sure, we thought we knew the odds. Least, you did. The old midway had taken a licking from TV, but where John Q's tastes and trends are concerned you knew all the signs, didn't you, Rollo? You used to say you had a crystal ball for a brain, right? And what you saw in it was audiences tiring of two-dimensional images on their flat little screens and demanding their weirdos and monsters flesh-and-blood *real.* So you brought back the freak shows. Or tried to. You figured on becoming the space age Barnum, and with me as your hard-travellin' eagle scout you almost had it made.

Except your crystal ball forgot to tip you off to the wonders of modern surgery. Jeeze, I jetted from Taiwan to Timbuktu, from Basra to Bahia. I beat bushes, Rollo, I scaled mountains and waded

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

swamps. No lead was too tough, no jungle hideout or desert shack too inaccessible for old relentless Louie if he figured there were midgets, Siamese twins, super-fatties, human hairpins, wolfmen, three-legged or two-headed kids to be ambushed, labelled and shipped stateside to the Great Rollo, Showman Supreme and his drooling audiences.

And wha' happened, boy?

The moment they touched civilization, those goddam ungrateful grotesques hobbled, slithered and shuffled off to hospitals in Houston, New England or wherever. And got themselves *repaired.* Cost no object, there was always some philanthropic nut or bleeding heart society to pick up the tab. The thin men were fattened, the fatties deflated, the Siameses separated and the dwarfs stretched.

Tampering with nature, I call it, Rollo. Anyway, the space age Barnum was a bust, right? Surgery and do-gooders, Rollo, have murdered the freakie business for keeps.

It was about then I got this letter from Gino. I didn't know Gino from Marcello Mastroianni but the way he told it he was my cousin, my only surviving relative in the old country. Every other branch of the family had followed mine to the States. Gino had kept track of us all and he wanted to come over too but couldn't raise the lire. Now he was drumming imported electric toothbrushes but his territory was strictly boondocks, not many of the citizens had electricity and those who did had no teeth.

Well, Gino had come upon this elderly party holed up alone in a ruined monastery who claimed to be a descendant of Joseph de Cobertino. Gino went on to explain in his letter who Cobertino was but thanks to you, Rollo, I already knew. I mean, you were always a bug on levitation, you used to tell me how guys with this gift could levitate themselves or others with the help of a little induced ecstasy, sacred or profane. Mostly sacred, as far as the record shows. And this sixteenth century monk Joe Cobertino was almost always up in the air over something. Hell, he'd pop off at the drop of a prayer-book to twenty feet or more.

Since his brethren were lucky if they made twenty inches they soon greened up with envy. As top banana, the chief monk wasn't pleased either by Cobertino's constantly going over his head and now he faced a mutiny in his monastery. You told me the upshot, Rollo. Yeah, they banished Joe to Assissi where the defiant s.o.b. thumbed his nose at them from a record-smashing 65 feet, give or take an inch.

And Rollo, you told me how your pappy as a kid in Buffalo saw the Davenport brothers winging around their dining room and floating through an open window

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

into the garden. Was it Willie or Ira who hit the ceiling one day so hard his head broke through the plaster? And didn't you tell me about that Washington dame who ran a seance for President Lincoln and he hopped on a Steinway—or was it a harpsichord?—which floated about the premises? Sure you did, for I remember slamming my elbow into your gut and cracking that she must have been one hell of a happy medium to have given gloomy old Abe such a lift.

Yeah, you knew all about levitation, Rollo. Except how to pull it off. You prayed for a genuine levitation act, none of these feeble horizontals to maybe five feet against a phony black drape and a hoop passed to and fro to show it's all on the level. That stuff went down solid back in the days of prop-powered planes, you used to say, but now we got high-flying jets and rockets and human levitation just hasn't moved up with the times, and that was another reason for the slump in the carny biz.

The important thing though was that Gino's letter seemed to clinch your pet theory of levitation being a hereditary thing. Seems this Cobertino descendant had no interest in electric toothbrushes and Gino was just snapping his case of samples shut when right before his eyes this old guy reared on tiptoes and floated up.

Gino said he dropped his samples and ran like a bat. He swiveled once to see the old guy hovering maybe twelve feet with his legs swinging like he was walking on air. And right then, up from Gino's memory file popped a commercial! Lou Fontana, International Agent For Rollo's Universal Fantasy Shows, Inc. And he lost no time reaching me.

Crafty? He let me have all the necessary details except just where Cobertino was located, I mean the precise place. He hung a price tag on that one: a one-way ticket to the U.S. I sent it at once. You would have done the same, Rollo. All kinds of real magic lying around, you used to say, if you only looked for it. And *believed* in it. In our racket, a closed mind makes an empty purse. Right?

Okay, so I got two-timed. No, it doesn't run in the family, Rollo, there's a bad apple in every barrel and Gino was it and I bit. Still, if he'd been within grabbing distance instead of midflight for New York when I found that this Cobertino was a palsied ex-window cleaner no longer able to get off the ground even with a 12-foot ladder, I would have broken his back.

All right, Rollo, so I've pulled off a few dirty tricks of my own. But only for the sake of business, you know? And I *never* played a blood relative for a sucker.

But it takes more than a cousin's betrayal to daunt old dauntless Louie, kiddo. Furthermore, I had one of my five-star hunches that

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

somewhere this side of the ocean was the genuine article, no hoops or backdrops, an honest-to-God levitee sitting on his (or her) launch pad, waiting only the arrival of never-give-up Lou to sweet-talk him into a count-down for lift-off.

So I hung around Europe for a while.

London kept me busy. It was no sweat tracking down Mrs. Guppy's *great-etc.-great-grandaughter* though. Name of Effie. You had the dope on Mrs. Guppy, didn't you, Rollo? She was the rummy who floated across London from Hampstead Heath to Chelsea in her nightgown. Well, Effie inherited none of Mrs. G's uplift, I'm sorry to say, unless the fact of her being elevator hop in a twelve-story hotel means anything.

Then there were reports of immigrants brewing a little West Indian voodoo in Stepney and levitating a few neighbors on the side. Took lynx-eyed Lou just twenty minutes to spot 'em for a bunch of Caribbean con men. Ditto, cockney variety, the Bethnel Green couple who swore their son Alfred slid *upstairs* on the stairway rail at ten every morning. Honestly, Rollo, I must have checked out thirty leads in London. They led everywhere—but up.

Then I met this Welsh guy in a pub off Charing Cross Road. The pub was jammed with squirming drunks and the oversized, onion-smelling leek in the Welch guy's lapel kept belting me in the kisser. But he got to talking about levitation, so old unflinching Lou didn't cop out. Nossir, although it was even more of an ordeal because every time another Welsh guy pushed into the pub mine would break off his story and begin bellowing a hymn with him. And this particular night must have been some Welsh saint's anniversary or something because Welsh guys kept pushing in all the goddam time.

But in spite of the interruptions and an accent which was such an up-and-down lilt I'm telling you, Rollo, I near got seasick listening to it, enough of his spiel cut through to stir the old juices, so much so that my hands trembled and I kept watering the Welsh guy's leek with spilt beer. He'd come from some burg called Pontyput where there was this preacher, Morgan 'Morgan, who had first started out as a free-lance missionary working the Himalaya circuit with a schedule for turning every last lama into a holy-rollin' Methodist.

Well, Morgan Morgan stumbled into the kind of valley Ronald Colman got hung up on but instead of staying there for keeps he stopped over five years. Long enough to switch religions and marry some lama's lovely daughter. Also long enough, Rollo, to soak up on some of the tribe's mystic know-how.

The reason Morgan Morgan did-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

n't stay in happy valley was that a party of Everest climbers who had run out of oxygen round about Camp Four wandered close to it on their descent. The climbers hadn't a clue where in hell they were because one of them happened to be a Welshman whose constant singing had so gotten on the nerves of the Sherpa guides they all quit.

But even this hadn't stopped the guy's mouth and it was the echo of his singing, bouncing from peak to peak and into happy valley, which made Morgan Morgan suddenly homesick. And sure enough he trailed out of there, towing Mrs. Morgan Morgan, to join the mountaineer in a duet and lead the party down and out of the mountains.

Well, Rollo, according to the guy with the leek, Morgan Morgan launched his own gospel in Pontyput. Now you spike oriental mysticism with Welsh religious hellfire, and brother you got yourself a highball. Morgan Morgan's pals back at the lamastery knew the art of levitation to their fingertips. Or toe-tips, Rollo. Eh? They practised it whenever their feet felt tired, instead of slumping in a chair and hoisting them on a footrest like you or me, they would literally take the weight off 'em by floating off the ground.

And at Morgan Morgan's very first revival meeting, whenever any of the SRO crowd he'd attracted grew sufficiently ecstatic he had only to apply his lama-taught knack to lift them clear out of their pews. Those who were not sanctified enough remained grounded, natch, and the altitudes of the uplifted varied with the degree of their ecstasy.

You reading me, Rollo?

Look, the guy in the pub had left Pontyput twenty years but far as he knew Morgan Morgan was still packing 'em in and sending 'em flying and booting off every session with a cocky recap of past successes. Like he'd say, "Raised brother Evans to five feet last week. Got Huw Splott up to nine. Sister Jenkins hit seven-three and, praise be, if she'd only cut down on snacks between meals I'd have got her to eight." That kind of thing.

You bet, Rollo. I was on the Welsh express out of Paddington next morning.

Pontyput is so many cottages, pubs and chapels, scattered like a fistful of dice up one side of a mountain. The railroad rounded the other side, which meant a five-mile roller-coaster ride in a horse and buggy from the station. But it wasn't the bone-jarring which had me cussin' at the end of it, Rollo. What hiked my blood pressure was the old buggy driver, how he confirmed that sure enough every word I'd heard about Morgan Morgan was honest truth—and waited until we were rattling into Pontyput before he let me have it, right on the button.

"It was Morgan Morgan's great-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

est miracle," yipped the old guy. "And by God it ruined him." He tickled his nag's shanks with a switch. "For weeks he'd been trying to get Dai Pillow up. See, Dai had left it a bit late getting the revival in his soul. He'd spent so much of his life boozin' and whorin' the spirit just couldn't budge him. Well, this night Morgan Morgan forgot the rest of the congregation and concentrated on Dai Pillow. Fair took the sweat off Morgan, it did, and put him flat on his back, kickin' and screechin' for the spirit to raise Dai Pillow off his backsides. And all of a sudden, Dai shouted Glory be, I'm off, and up he did go like a trout. Halfway to the chapel roof he slowed as if the power was running out but Morgan Morgan sort of gave a shudder and screeched again and Dai Pillow zoomed like a bloody Guy Fawkes rocket and hit the chapel skylight."

Rollo, the old guy had *me* sweating by then. I could already see the marquee billing: Rollo Enterprises Presents Morgan Morgan. Guaranteed To Lift You Off Your Seat. A sensational new twist to audience participation, right? A real, socko hit.

Then I remembered he'd said *ruin*. "Keep talking," I said and nudged him so violently he almost fell off the buggy. "What happened then?"

He looked at me like I was trying to choke him. "Only one thing could," he said. "There was Dai Pillow, dirty knees and nose like a beetroot rubbing the skylight window. And Preacher Morgan couldn't ease him down none, and got so scared the power might suddenly drain altogether, Pillow being a poor risk having been such a terrible sinner. And if that happened Pillow would fall thirty feet and split his skull. So Morgan Morgan told Deacon Dodd to fetch a ladder and bring Pillow down from there and Dodd climbed to the skylight and groped for him."

He stopped the buggy outside a sagging hotel and shoved a horny hand under my face. "Pontyput," he announced. "Three quid, then."

The swindling old crud! He told me two at the station. "Come on!" I roared. "What the hell happened to Dai Pillow?"

I smacked a pound note in his palm and promised a couple more after he had told me.

"That Deacon Dodd," he said at last. "Clumsy faggot couldn't even hold a collection plate without dropping it. When he tried to pull Pillow on the ladder, damned if he didn't fumble and slip the skylight catch."

I hooted at him. "Don't stop!"

"Nothing more to tell," he said. "The skylight opened, Dai Pillow slipped through Dodd's fingers. Never seen again."

"Morgan Morgan?"

"He went too. Figured the law would hold him accountable.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Swore he'd never preach again and ran off in such a hurry he left his wife and a kid. Last anybody saw of him he was boarding a collier in Cardiff Dock bound for Bombay." The grubby palm opened again. "Two quid, mister."

Rollo, I'm not trying to be funny when I tell you I felt thoroughly *welshed*. I mean, he could have told me when I first mentioned Morgan Morgan back at the station that I wouldn't find him in Pontyput. But then he would have lost a fare. Well, I can appreciate a business sense. I got one too. I threw a single pound note at him and told him he could whistle for the other. And I jumped down.

And if I'd had any brains, Rollo, I would have scrubbed the levitation hunt right then. But you know no-surrender Louie. I checked in at the crummy hotel. It wasn't that I thought Morgan Morgan might unexpectedly show up from Shangri-La or wherever he had fled to, but maybe I'd get a lead on his kin if they were still around.

That possibility washed out when someone told me that after papa took his powder, Mama Morgan Morgan said good riddance to him, picked up her kid, scrammed to another part of Wales and settled down under a different identity. All this was maybe fifteen years ago and no one in Pontyput could tell me what name she had taken or just where she had gone.

Rollo, the hunch which sent me on a final hike around a few valleys beyond Pontyput should have been strangled at birth. I didn't think that way, though, in the Cherry that morning.

The Cherry is a crumpled shoebox of an inn half smothered with gorse bushes down a dirt road leading nowhere. The minute I entered, Rollo, I forgot all about Morgan Morgan and the entire levitation bit. No, I won't expect you to imagine the moonlight and roses feeling I got, the bells and violins I heard. I'm not asking you to understand just why all my intentions of shaking the Welsh dust off my heels fell apart. Because you never saw Miriam.

Now you know me and broads. Love-'em-and-leave-'em Louie, right? Oh, sure, there was Paula, the redhead in Detroit. Summer of '59, remember? Paula took it harder than the others and tried to kill herself. Law of averages, I guess, sooner or later I had to pick a neurotic. Okay, it shook me up at the time but I got over it, and if I didn't touch a dame for another two years it wasn't because I got scared or repentent, don't you think that, Rollo, not for a minute. Didn't mean I'd run dry either. Not this baby. It's just that any fellow naturally attractive to women has to lay off once in a while so he'll stay that way. So he won't miss when something special comes along.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Like Miriam.

It's tough to say exactly what hooked me. Sure, there were the obvious things. The way her loose blouse sagged open when she stooped to collect glasses. The soft dimples behind her knees when she walked. The ripe redness of her cheeks and lips that came from no makeup kit but the showers, gales, and sunbursts that keep chasing each other across this Wales. Maybe it was the magical things in her voice, or her rippling hair more glistening black than the coal they rape the hills for around here. Whatever it was, Rollo, I couldn't take my lamps off her after she fetched my beer and was farther along the bar cleaning glasses.

All right, I can hear you saying what's with this line of crap, my number one boy was and always will be Louie the Lecher where dames are concerned and this Miriam just happened to be a dish of luscious Welsh rarebit for a guy who's been off it too long.

I wish to God that's all there had been to it, Rollo.

Because when I made my first pass and she hung out the hands off sign I could have drowned it in a couple more lukewarm beers and got the hell out of Wales. Instead I went through the whole act. In a mountain lane under the moon—she had granted me a few dates—I tried out the bashful Romeo bit, pawing boyishly at the purple silk shawl she always wore outdoors. Followed up with the successful businessman, overloaded with dollars. This last routine spiced with promises of lifelong riches back in the States should have taken her, Rollo. But nothing did.

Why? Pal, if it had simply meant that Louie the Great Lover was growing senile and losing the old charm, I would have twitched my shoulder pads in a philosophic shrug and faced the inexorable. Louie the realist. But she was giving me the sweet Welsh brush because of a young miner named Danny who lived three valleys away and was saving the pennies he got for cutting coal so they could be married.

And that, Rollo, made me mad.

I mean, to be frustrated by no act of God but her preference for some black-faced slob from the pits. She showed me his picture and it didn't help that with the coal dust rubbed off him he was a good-looking young brute. The pic showed him in the chapel choir where, Miriam said proudly, he was the best baritone. She asked me if I could see the bulge under his shirt and when I said I couldn't she gave a shy little smile and said Danny had sworn never to lose his wedding savings so he kept 'em in pound-notes stuffed in a money belt strapped around his torso.

Yeah, I was real mad, Rollo. Mad enough to track down Danny and hoke up an acquaintance, which isn't hard to do in any

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Welsh pub. Mad enough to feed him a line about a Hollywood movie friend of mine now in London who had come over looking for an Albert Finney with a singing voice. Mad enough to ask him up to London so my friend could run him through a screen test.

He fell. I'd persuaded him to tell no one in advance, to avoid disappointment if the test failed. He wrote Miriam that he wouldn't be seeing her next weekend because the pit was working overtime. And we left for London on Saturday morning.

The pub crawl began around six that night. At first he began drinking out of disappointment after learning from me that my friend had been hurriedly recalled to Hollywood. But this was Danny's first taste of London or anywhere else outside Wales.

I took him to some smoky cellar clubs I knew and soon the liquor and the proximity of bare-showgirl flesh were making his eyes glaze. At 3 A.M. we landed in a joint where even the piano player had passed out and the strippers were working solely to a steady drumming while their eyes roved the half-empty tables for suckers. Danny watched them with a look on his face like I've seen often though I would have bet this was the first time he'd worn it.

When the set ended the strippers made for their marks and I wasn't surprised Danny was one. By then I figured I'd had enough of him. So when this blond was sprawled over his knees and his hands were excited and grappling, I paid for my own drinks and made for the exit. "Danny boy," I said by way of a farewell. "If Miriam could only see you now."

Before leaving London I booked a plane passage for home, then went back to Wales to pick up my gear and check out. Maybe I wanted one last eyeful of Miriam. Maybe I was curious to know if she had heard from Danny. Whatever the impulse, Rollo, I stopped off at the Cherry and that was my biggest mistake.

She brought me my beer and asked if she could see me after the Cherry closed up for the night. I started to play coax me, then cut it out and said yes. She had been crying.

She came out at eleven and we started to walk up our usual mountain path. It was a popular lovers' lane and all along it couples were busy. So we took another path, one that headed for the other side of the mountain. She suggested it. When we were all alone she turned on me with those damned haunting eyes scanning my face and she said, "Why did you take Danny to London?"

I can't remember quite how I answered that one, Rollo. A mixture of bluff, I think, and a phony tale of being crazy jealous and wanting somehow to harm Danny

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and then finding that I liked Danny and couldn't go through with it. I don't think she even heard me. We walked some more and she told me Danny had written her from London, confessing everything.

I mean *everything*, Rollo. Did you think that kind of a guy existed any more, I mean one so true to his gal he'd keep back nothing even though it tore her heart out? Neither did I. He even told her of his head throbbing when the sunlight woke him up and of the trash cans he was propped against in some stinking lane that Sunday morning. And of how he felt when he groped inside his shirt and found the money belt gone.

He said he would never come back to Wales again.

"So now I'm all alone," she finished quietly. Her parents were dead, she'd told me. She lived with the Cherry landlord's old maid aunt.

I said, "Gee, Miriam, I'm sorry. If I had known—" I gave a helpless flutter with my hands so she would know I was at a loss for words. I let one hand rest against her elbow. She didn't withdraw.

"It's not your fault," she whispered. "Danny just wasn't what I took him for."

"You found out in time," I said. "And you're not alone." I put my other arm around her. "You've got me."

"Yes." She raised her face. "I've got you."

Nothing in her tone alarmed me. I didn't think it strange that her eyes should sparkle so fiercely when the lonely valley we'd wandered into was so narrow no moonlight could squeeze into it. I was exulting too damn much. This is it, I told myself, chalk up another conquest, Louie, this is what you really planned when you took Danny boy up to London. . . .

At the end of the kiss my legs were shaking. My face suddenly sweated so I buried it in her purple shawl and made some muffled and pointless remark. I said, "Snazzy silk, sweetheart."

"Not silk," she murmured dreamily. "Yak hair. It was my mother's."

We were kissing again and her arms tightened about me in delicious spasms and every nerve of me was tingling, Rollo, tingling with an ecstasy I had never, but *never*, known before . . . Then it happened.

My mouth slowly lifted from hers. My body began sliding upwards out of her clutch. It was like an invisible rope was lashed around me and hauling me heavenward. Her hands trailed down my sides as I went up. And up. Those blazing dark eyes were the last I saw of her and her mocking laugh the last I heard.

And then I screamed, *"Yak hair! Goddammit, no!"*

It's been eight hours now, Rollo. I'm hungry and goddam cold.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Sometimes I move a bit left or right depending which way a wind gust hits me, but mostly I'm in the same spot. Maybe 150 feet above the most deserted valley in this God-forsaken land. Nothing stirs down there and the plane which flew over ten minutes ago was too high to spot me. Or I'm too low. There ought to be some birds along soon. First handy pigeon that passes I'll grab his leg and tie this notebook to it. Someone's got to know about me, I can't stay up here freezing *forever.*

Okay, Rollo, I got you your levitation act, a real boffola. Proved your heredity hunch, too. What I want to know now though is—*how in hell do I get down?*

MID-YEAR CLEARANCE

Take advantage of our Mid-Year warehouse clearance and send us $1.00 for seven (7) different back issues of FANTASY AND SCIENCE FICTION. You can't go wrong at this price, so fill in the coupon below immediately.

(Sorry, at this low price, no orders for specific issues can be filled.)

Mercury Press, Inc., 347 East 53 Street, New York, N. Y. 10022
Send me 7 different back issues of FANTASY & SCIENCE FICTION.
I enclose $1.00. *(Maximum order—21 different for $3.00.)*

Name 6-66

Address .....

City .....State.....Zip.....

This offer is available only in U. S., Canada and Mexico.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

How does one detect intelligence? By measuring the size of the brain?—or the complexity of cries which may be language? Patrick had no instruments, yet his job was to detect intelligence in its subtlest form. He was an esper, his talent was with the alien, and his decision would determine the fate of an entire planet.

FORGIVE US OUR DEBTORS

by Jon DeCles

ALL ESPERS ARE LONELY. Telepaths, clairvoyants, teleports, and all the rarer talents: all of them are lonely. They are set apart by their ability, from other men and from themselves.

Gentle Patrick was lonelier than most. His talent was with the alien, and it put a barrier between him and all the friendly, familiar things that a man needs. Patrick could esp the lowest sentience. He could explore with his mind the *life-atmosphere* of a new world and detect the subtle traces of intelligence.

The Empire needed Patrick. Landing colonists on a world capable of its own exploitation was a mistake the Empire could not afford, and that was why Red Kitra was his assignment.

Red Kitra revolted Patrick. It had only one kind of animal life: a creature of almost limitless permutability. To begin with, from eggs hatched worms; from the worms' pupa came a small, birdlike creature. At irregular intervals, the time limit locked in its genes and not answerable to seasonal changes, this creature evolved to larger and more sophisticated forms. After the larval worm, which took its nourishment from a cultivated bacteria growing in the worm's nest, this creature became a carnivore; each succeeding form fed on its predecessor. The creature was its own natural enemy.

Some of this Patrick sensed during the day, when the other members of the classifying team were testing the atmosphere for poten-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

tially dangerous microbes. During the night his mind was choked with the hot, oppressive questing of animal consciousness intent upon devouring the product of its reproduction. All that first night, their shiny silver ship nestled in the barren foothills of a decaying mountain chain, the other two men of the team slept while Patrick lay awake and felt his way through the haze of hungers flowing erratically into the ship.

The next morning at breakfast, Patrick sketched the ecological set-up so far as he had sensed it during the night. "The difficulty is finding the highest *type* the creature becomes in its evolution. Each brain, each individual, evolves through all the other animal forms. The thoughts all have the same *feeling* to them. The sheer volume of sameness makes the life-atmosphere impenetrable. I can't latch on to anything definite, so I can't tell if there is intelligence or not. The little interruption in what I experienced last night came from the direction of the mountains, but it is spotty. I will have to go out there and take a walk in that direction until I find out what caused it. It could be intelligence in its early stages, or it could be some different kind of animal life. Something that sets up interference because it's completely at odds with the prevailing life form."

"How long do you think it will be before you know?" said Sampson, who took care of the ship and its machinery.

"I don't know," said Patrick. "I don't know what I'm seeking. I'll try and make it fast. This place gets on my nerves."

"Mine too," said Riley, the third member of the team. "If they'd just stop this nonsense about 'developing alien potential' we wouldn't have to stay long on any of these primitive-stage planets. If they have much worth, the natives will show it. If they haven't, and they pose a danger to the Empire, then we should dispose of them at the first opportunity."

"Remember your orders, Riley," said Sampson. "We leave them alone if they have intelligence, and the Empire sends in a team of Guidance controllers."

"One day we'll run into something we don't understand, and before we have the chance, it'll all be over but the suffering." Riley was bitter.

"That's happened a couple of times," said Sampson. "But our espers warned us of high sentience, so we had some time to watch and prepare. We didn't know what was coming with the insects of Isam, but we were watching, and prepared for the worst. If we hadn't been, the colony would have been wiped out and the bugs out in space ready to go on a crusade."

"And that is why we don't colonize on 'occupied' planets any

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

more," said Patrick, finishing his coffee.

"Why don't we just sterilize them?" asked Riley coldly.

Patrick could feel the waves of hate emanating from Riley. It was to be expected. An esper could feel the pain of a battle; not just the pain of his own people, but the agony of the enemy. It bred in the esper a little more compassion than most men have. He stood from the table and left the compartment. Even of jealousy and envy, an esper was compassionate. He *knew* how the other man felt.

Kitra's sun was old, and Red Kitra was old. The mountains were melting ruins. Thorn bushes grew everywhere, brown scrubby things, pushing their ineffectual roots into the dry red clay. Rocky slopes and erosions made walking difficult. The medikit strapped to Patrick's arm continually worked to offset the poisons injected by the thorn bushes. The sampling and injecting needles in his biceps became a constant pain after the first hour.

The worm nests were a continual threat. Patrick carried a wooden staff with which to prod the path ahead. The nests consisted of a ball of worms, about four feet in diameter, buried two or three inches under the soil. At night the worms came to the surface to absorb the rain. During the day they slowly exuded the moisture, which, mixed with their excrement, fed the bacteria on which they were nourished. A man's weight would break the thin crust of the nest and plunge him waist-deep in the putrid mass.

On the second day of his trek, just as the deep red sun reached its zenith, Patrick discovered an artifact: stone with a roughly fashioned spike pointing northwest. He used the stone to sight and slowly increased the setting of his pocket burner until a broad path was singed through the brambles. Another marker was visible, about two hundred yards away.

Even though the stones marked the easiest path through the tumbled maze of boulders, Patrick still made slow progress. The sun passed below the horizon, the soil gave up some of its heat, and the air was filled with radiant movement, like ripples in a lake of blood.

As he looked for a place to camp, Patrick saw the web. It was ugly, made of ropy strands and put together badly. It had a sticky coating, much like a spider's web, but lacked the architectural beauty of the spider's fashioning.

There was an animal caught in the web. A thing about the size of a crow: it looked more like a rat than a bird, and wriggled with diseased lack of coordination. Tiny bits of worms clung to its yellowed teeth and grey-white tongue.

Patrick took out his burner and melted the sticky tendons on the web. Then he put on gloves and

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

removed what was left from the creature's wings. With one gauntleted hand he stroked its knobby head—like a farm boy back on earth trying to hypnotize a chicken—so that it would not struggle and injure itself. It relaxed; he could feel its trust. But it kept its gaze intently on his eyes, while he groomed it, murmuring reassurances.

Then he pushed his staff on the ground; it broke through. He set the little creature gently next to the nest of worms and watched it devour as many as its misguided mouth could fasten upon. In the dark and garnet-colored sky, he saw the web-maker flying in great circles. After a few minutes it glided slowly out of sight.

Gentle Patrick found a rocky prominence where the brittle jungle was stayed by lack of soil, and made camp. When the nightly rain came his blankets and hood kept him dry.

Back on Earth, Patrick thought, the rain renewed and cleansed, causing a clean smell in the air. It made insects chirp, and when the rain stopped, night-birds sang. On Red Kitra, the night and the rain brought forth the foulness of the rotting soil. The stench of the worms wafted about him as the little white larvae crawled about absorbing water. He occasionally heard the mewling sound of a grounded avian.

It happened quickly. He followed the markers until he came to a shattered peak. The heat and cold of millenia had split the great rock in several upright fragments, like the walls of a ruined tower. The area within was roughly paved with bits of stone and dirt pressed between them. The center was a depression filled with rain water.

The thick atmosphere pervading his mind cleared as he walked past the boundaries toward the pool of water. He felt that which he had taken for intelligence, and saw its exact extent.

On a world whose life-atmosphere was so completely homogenized, it was reasonable that a higher form should develop this form of trapping its food. A *something* projected at the sub-conscious level. An irritation of the mind, designed to cause curiosity. He had been drawn, like a moth to a candle, to this place. Drawn to be food for yet another stage of the predominant life form.

One thing only seemed to lie before his whirling mind, the final significant fact, and then the pattern would be complete . . .

A sticky coil fell across his shoulder, wrapped about his torso and pinned his left arm to his side. He tried to pull it away, but the loop jerked back and threw him to his knees. Another coil fell about him, entangling his right arm and drawing it behind him. As he fell on his back he felt the arm snap.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

At the same time, one of the coils lashed across his face and sent pain stinging through his cheek. Then the whole side of his face went numb.

The medikit pumped depressants in his veins, then combatted them with stimulants to fight the poison of the web which now drew tightly about him.

He saw the sky. The web-maker was close above him, beating its wings, looking down with blank wet eyes. It dropped one more coil from a natural recess in its body, a coil excreted, then manipulated with its knobby, clawed fingers. Then it beat its wings and flew up high to wait.

So, thought Patrick, it spins a poisoned web. But a poison that does not last; otherwise the creature yesterday would have been paralyzed. No, it can only use the poison on those it traps on the run. Or perhaps this is a different, yet higher form of the species. Perhaps the one I saw yesterday. . . . *God!*

The pain from his arm, the poison reaching his brain, conspired: he was lost in hot, dark blackness.

Gentle Patrick lay with the sharp edges of stones cutting his flesh. His eyes were sealed, as with great rock lids of jars, sepulchres for viscera of dead kings awaiting the day of awakening. A travesty of beloved Sol beat him with fists of glowing fire, suffocated him with waves of its hot breath.

With the strength of his whole body, he strained and lifted the lids of his eyes. The sky was like the flesh inside an open wound, from which all the blood is drained. His captor, like a carrion fly, circled.

In an hour, Patrick knew his capabilities. He could move his eyes from side to side. He could open his mouth, shut it, and swallow. He could make a slight sound of agony with his throat. For the rest, he was paralyzed.

The rain that night didn't last long enough for him to slake his thirst with open mouth gaping for the droplets. With morning the red sun of Kitra baked his body again. He felt the water leave him. By the time of the rain of the third night he was turning to dust. Then his mind went sliding down a sandy hot corridor to an empty flaming place.

There was only pain. He kept his eyes shut to the burning sky; it was useless. Only to dream, to dream was left him.

He was dreaming when it came.

One white and mottled white moon, he dreamed, luminous in a garden of jasmine and mock-orange perfuming the night. The intoxicating smell of fresh-cut chickweed under his bare feet. The stars bowing through curtain clouds to encores, and yet more encores. Earthworms were washed by the rain, pink and clean little creatures who aerated the soil, replen-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ished it, made it rich, and black, and fertile.

Something plopped on his chest. Something cold and wet. Something breathing in fetid little gasps. Claws dug in and tore the left side of his chest. Teeth bit him.

A cry escaped his lips, fragile; all he could muster to his defence. The creature started. Patrick looked into its grey, wet eyes.

The creature sniffed with its single nostril and licked his blood with its scabrous white tongue. It crawled close to his face and stared. Then it flapped its wings and flew away.

He opened his eyes when he felt the pressure again on his chest. The little creature had returned. Its oyster eyes stared into his for a moment. Then it darted forward and dropped something wet and wriggling into his mouth.

The thing in his mouth was foul. It was alive when he swallowed it, but it was wet, and it eased his thirst. The small avian flew away to bring him more food.

It was the creature he had freed from a web some days ago. *Poor confused thing*, he thought, swallowing convulsively. *Has it decided it hatched me?*

A wave of puzzlement flowed through him. Not his own; the bird-thing's. It diminished and faded out, as he lost consciousness.

He woke to feel moisture on his lips again. Relief welled up, and shattered with the scrabbling of featherweight claws on his chest. He could not move—that was the worst part.

For a moment his instinctive terror blanketed his mind. But it was mingled with something else, an equal and opposite terror. The bird-thing had taken the air as he woke, and hovered unsteadily, pouring its own alarm at him.

Its flying staggers began to ease his fear. Wryly he groaned, "Don't *mother* me, bird! Just let me die."

It landed immediately. His lips moistened again and again while he looked at a picture: the bird-thing being freed from a web, yes; an enormous Patrick-person (*that's me*? he thought dazedly, *so large*? *I guess to the bird I am*) poking a hole in the ground. He *felt* the avian's hunger sated (*how long had it struggled there*?) and its thirst eased. The picture faded.

He knew again what he had always known from his first loneliness. It is abstractions that are insular. Words are peculiar to their speakers, in the Babel that is Earth. Pictures imposed on the black velvet esp-field, and the emotional ground-bass that accompanies them like silent music—these are the universal language.

He knew (vaguely, because mother-love, in this terrain, was an abstraction) that the avian was recalling to him its puzzlement earlier as he saw his own inadvertent picture, distorted: something like

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

a bluebird that turned into a cardinal that darkened to a creature as much a rodent as a crow, and black; dropping worms into three wide-open bird mouths. The avian's attempt at projecting the nest his thought had sketched was a miserable failure. *So,* thought Patrick, *no nests. All right.* There was a blank moment. And then, he would have sworn, a kind of indignation. *Mildly insulted?* It was clear enough. The bird-thing wanted him to know it had not been acting out of misguided instinct, not feeding a "chick."

And now, while it ministered to his cracked lips, his parched throat, its positive emotions came through his fog: gratitude. Gratitude and compassion. He was ashamed at having belittled it. If his eyes had not been burning dry, he might have wept.

How long he lay there! He lost track of time in the flashes of unconsciousness and his psi-faculty dimmed with his weakness. Each time the ugly little bird-thing brought him larvae he fought down his nausea and accepted the gift.

This time it had a great many worms. Some spilled past the sides of his mouth and fell to the ground. The creature clamped one of its claws around his collar-bone and stretched its neck down beside his head to pick up the leftovers and return them.

Coldness and shock ran through his body and his eyes focused suddenly on the web-maker, high in the sky. It was reeling, and one wing was stiff. It lost altitude quickly. It was falling, plummeting like a rock, like a meteor. Somewhere it hit the ground and its *death* flowed through him, a miasma of the soul.

The shock threw his psi-faculty wide open, and he esped *humanness* near by: the boiling anger and fear of Riley and Sampson. Patrick was not strong enough to stand the assault to shield himself against their murdering rawness. He slid into the quiet gulf of sleep and his body rested.

He awoke in space. Riley and Sampson floated above him, dressed in shorts and tee-shirts the same sterile white as the walls.

"What's the report, Patrick?" asked Sampson. "We're ready to transmit now. All we need is your opinion. Just tell me yes or no."

Only one piece, thought Patrick, was lacking. But without that datum he could not make his decision. He knew it was there, waiting in his mind, esped, classified, only to be fitted into the overall structure that would guide his verdict. Should this planet be opened to colonial exploitation, or should its single species be given the privilege of working out its own destiny? Red Kitra was an old planet; time might catch it coldly and kill the budding intelligence of its creatures.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Only one piece was missing.

"You killed that thing flying above me?" asked Patrick.

"Yes," said Riley. "We couldn't risk it killing you first. It might have gotten to you before we could. It would help a lot if you espers could carry a radio. We kept a tracer on your thorium battery, and figured it was odd for you to spend so much time in one place. It should have shown some movement on the screen, even if you just walked about."

"You shouldn't have killed it," said Patrick. "It was one of the forms of the thing I esped."

"We thought as much," said Sampson, "But we couldn't risk losing you. The Empire can't afford it."

"Nearly lost you anyway," said Riley, laughing harshly. "One of those little birds, the ones that eat the worms, was settling on you when we got there. It was about to take your throat apart. I bashed its brains out on a rock, but the damn thing bit my hand as I pulled it away from you. I got a pretty nasty infection myself."

A cold, writhing knot formed in Patrick's stomach. His vision blurred, and time became meaningless. Then the knot vanished and coldness was empty. His friend was dead.

He focused on the details of the small white cubicle, on the two men. The auburn globe of Red Kitra was visible through the port.

His job was over now, Patrick realized; all he had to do was announce his decision.

"What did man first use his intelligence *for?*" asked Patrick.

"To catch food," said Sampson, impatient, matter-of-fact, anxious to be at his instruments.

"Or to protect himself," said Riley. Patrick closed his mind, not to see again Riley's exultant flash as he *bashed its brains out on a rock,* the scarlet anger when *the damn thing bit his* murdering *hand.*

"Come on, Patrick," said Sampson. "It takes power to keep this transmitter going. What's your decision?"

He knew he might have killed the web-maker, himself, had he had the chance. But one life form in Red Kitra's cycle had protected another than itself—and had been able to show him why. The avian had won its planet for its kind.

"Intelligence," said Patrick. Then the loneliness closed in again.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

SCIENCE

THE ISLES OF EARTH

by Isaac Asimov

ONE OF THE NICEST THINGS ABOUT this series of essays I write for F & SF is the mail it brings me—almost invariably good-humored and interesting.

Consider, for instance, my article UP AND DOWN THE EARTH (F & SF, February 1966), in which I maintained that Boston's Prudential was the tallest office building on continental North America (as opposed to the higher ones on the *island* of Manhattan). The moment that article hit the newsstands I received a card from a resident of Greater Boston, advising me to follow the Charles and Neponset Rivers back to their source and see if Boston could not be considered an island.

I followed his advice and, in a way, he was right. The Charles River flows north of Boston and the Neponset River flows south of it. In southwestern Boston they approach within 2½ miles of each other. Across that gap there meanders a stream from one to the other so that most of Boston and parts of some western suburbs (including the one I live in) are surrounded on all sides by surface water. The Prudential Tower, and my house, too, might therefore be considered, by a purist, to be located on an island.

Well!

But before I grow panicky, let me stop and consider. What is an island, anyway?

The word "island" comes from the Anglo-Saxon "eglond," and this may mean, literally, "water-land"; that is, "land surrounded by water."

This Anglo-Saxon word, undergoing natural changes with time, ought to have come down to us as "eyland" or "iland." An "s" was mistakenly inserted, however, through the influence of the word "isle"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

which is synonymous with "island" yet, oddly enough, is not etymologically related to it. For 'isle" we have to go back to classical times.

The ancient Greeks in their period of greatness were a seafaring people who inhabited many islands in the Mediterranean Sea as well as sections of the mainland. They, and the Romans who followed, were well aware of the apparently fundamental difference between the two types of land. An island was to them a relatively small bit of land surrounded by the sea. The mainland (of which Greece and Italy were part) was, on the other hand, continuous land with no known end.

To be sure, the Greek geographers assumed that the land surface was finite and that the mainland was surrounded on all sides by a rim of ocean but, except for the west, that was pure theory. In the west, beyond the Strait of Gibraltar, the Mediterranean Sea did indeed open up into the broad ocean. No Greek or Roman, however, succeeded in travelling overland so far to the north, east, or (in Africa) south, as to stand on the edge of land and, with his own eyes, gaze at the open ocean, though they did see the Persian Gulf and Red Sea—inlets of the Indian Ocean.

In Latin, then, the mainland was "terra continens"; that is, "land that holds together." The notion was that when you travelled on the mainland, there was always another piece of land holding on to the part you were traversing. There was no end. The phrase has come down to us as the word "continent."

On the other hand, a small bit of land, which did *not* hold together with the mainland, but which was separate and surrounded by the sea was "terra in salo" or "land in the sea." This shorted to "insula" in Latin; and, by successive steps, to "isola" in Italian, "isle" in English, and "île" in French.

The *strict* meaning of the word "isle," then, (and by extension the word "island") is that of land surrounded by salt water. Of course, this is undoubtedly *too* strict. It would render Manhattan's status rather dubious since it is bounded on the west by the Hudson River. Then, too, there are certainly bodies of land, usually called islands, nestled within lakes or rivers, which are certainly surrounded by fresh water. However even such islands must be surrounded by a thickness of water that is fairly large compared to the island's diameter. No one would dream of calling a large tract of land an island just because a creek marked it off. So Boston is *not* an island, practically speaking, and Manhattan is. However, for the purposes of the remainder of this article I am going to stick to the strict definition of the term and discuss only those islands that are surrounded by salt water—

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

If we do this, however, then again, strictly speaking, the land surface of the Earth consists of nothing but islands. There are no continents in the literal meaning of the word. The mainland is never endless. The Venetian traveller, Marco Polo, reached the eastern edge of the anciently-known mainland in 1275; the Portuguese navigator, Bartholomew Diaz, reached the southern edge in 1488; and Russian explorers marked off the northern edge in the 17th and early 18th Centuries.

The mainland I refer to here is usually considered as making up the three continents of Asia, Europe and Africa. But why *three* continents, where there is only a single continuous sheet of land, if one ignores rivers and the man-made Suez Canal?

The multiplicity of continents dates back to Greek days. The Greeks of Homeric times were concentrated on the mainland of Greece and faced a hostile second mainland to the east of the Aegean. The earliest Greeks had no reason to suspect that there was any land connection between the two mainlands and they gave them two different names; their own was Europe, the other Asia.

These terms are of unknown origin but the theory I like best suggests they stem from the Semitic words "assu" and "erev" meaning "east" and "west" respectively. (The Greeks may have picked up these words from the Phoenicians, by way of Crete, just as they picked up the Phoenician alphabet.) The Trojan War of 1200 B.C. begins the confrontation of, literally, the West and the East; a confrontation that is still with us.

Of course, Greek explorers must have learned, early in the game, that there was indeed a land connection between the two mainlands. The myth of Jason and the Argonauts, and their pursuit of the Golden Fleece, probably reflects trading expeditions antedating the Trojan War. The Argonauts reached Colchis (usually placed at the eastern extremity of the Black Sea) and there the two mainlands merged.

Indeed, as we now know, there is some 1500 miles of land north of the Black Sea, and a traveller can pass from one side of the Aegean Sea to the other—from Europe to Asia and back—by way of this 1500 mile connection. Consequently, Europe and Asia are separate continents only by geographic convention and there is no real boundary between them at all. The combined land-mass is frequently spoken of as "Eurasia."

The Ural Mountains are arbitrarily set as the boundary between Europe and Asia in the geography books. Partly, this is because the Urals represent a mild break in a huge plain stretching for over 6,000 miles

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

from Germany to the Pacific Ocean, and partly because there is political sense in considering Russia (which, until about 1580, was confined to the region west of the Urals) part of Europe. Nevertheless, the Asian portion of Eurasia is so much larger than the European portion that Europe is often looked upon as a mere peninsula of Eurasia.

Africa is much more nearly a separate continent than Europe is. Its only land connection to Eurasia is the Suez Isthmus, which now is about a hundred miles wide, and in ancient times was narrower.

Still the connection was there and it was a well-travelled one, with civilized men (and armies too) criss-crossing it now and again—whereas they rarely crossed the land north of the Black Sea. The Greeks were aware of the link between the nations they called Syria and Egypt, and they therefore considered Egypt and the land west of it to be a portion of Asia.

The matter was different to the Romans. They were farther from the Suez Isthmus and throughout their early history that connection was merely of academic interest to them. Their connection with Africa was entirely by way of the sea. Furthermore, as the Greeks had once faced Troy on opposing mainlands with the sea between, so—a thousand years later—the Romans faced the Carthaginians on opposing mainlands with the sea between. The struggle with Hannibal was every bit as momentous to the Romans as the struggle with Hector had been to the Greeks.

The Carthaginians called the region about their city by a word which, in Latin, became Africa. The word spread, in Roman consciousness, from the immediate neighborhood of Carthage (what is now northern Tunisia) to the entire mainland the Romans felt themselves to be facing. The geographers of Roman times, therefore—notably the Greek-Egyptian Ptolemy, granted Africa the dignity of being a third continent.

But let's face facts and ignore the accidents of history. If one ignores the Suez Canal, one can travel from the Cape of Good Hope to the Bering Strait, or to Portugal or Lapland, without crossing salt water, so that the whole body of land forms a single continent. This single continent has no generally accepted name and to call it "Eurafrasia", as I have sometimes felt the urge to do, is ridiculous.

We can think of it this way, though. This tract of land is enormous but it is finite and it is bounded on all sides by ocean. Therefore it is an island; a vast one, to be sure, but an island. If we take that into account then there is a name for it; one that is sometimes used by geopoliticians. It is "the World Island."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The name seems to imply that the triple continent of Europe-Asia-Africa makes up the whole world and, you know, it nearly does. Consider Table 1. (And let me point out that in this and the succeeding tables in this article, the figures for area are fairly good but those for

Table 1—The World Island

	Area (square miles)	*Population*
Asia	16,500,000	1,580,000,000
Africa	11,500,000	290,000,000
Europe	3,800,000	640,000,000
The World Island	31,800,000	2,510,000,000

population are often quite shaky. I have tried to choke mid-1960's population figures out of my library, but I haven't always been able to succeed. Furthermore even when such figures are given they are all too frequently marked "estimate" and may be quite far off the truth. —But let's do our best.)

The World Island contains a little more than half the total land area of the globe. Even more significantly, it contains three-quarters of the Earth's population. It has a fair claim to the name.

The only tract of land that even faintly compares to the World Island in area and population is the American mainland, first discovered by primitive Asians many thousands of years ago, again by the Icelandic navigator, Leif Ericsson in 1000 A.D. and finally by the Italian navigator, Giovanni Caboto (John Cabot to the English nation, which employed his services), in 1497. I don't mention Columbus because he discovered only islands prior to 1497. He did not touch the American mainland until 1498.

Columbus thought that the new mainland was part of Asia, and so indeed it might have been. Its complete physical independence of Asia was not demonstrated till 1728, when the Danish navigator, Vitus Bering (employed by the Russians), explored what is now known as the Bering Sea and sailed through what is now called the Bering Strait, to show that Siberia and Alaska were not connected.

There is, therefore, a second immense island on Earth and this one is, traditionally, divided into two continents: North America and South America. These, however, if one ignores the man-made Panama Canal, are connected, and a man can travel from Alaska to Patagonia without crossing salt water.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

There is no convenient name for the combined continents. It can be called "the Americas" but that makes use of a plural term for what is a single tract of land and I reject it for that reason.

I would like to suggest a name of my own—"the New World Island." This capitalizes on the common (if old-fashioned) phrase "the New World" for the Americas. It also indicates the same sort of relationship between the World Island and the New World Island that there is between England and New England, or between York and New York.

The vital statistics on the New World Island are presented in Table 2. As you see, the New World Island has about half the area of the World Island, but only a little over one-sixth the population.

Table 2—The New World Island

	Area (square miles)	*Population*
North America	9,385,000	275,000,000
South America	7,035,000	157,000,000
The New World Island	16,420,000	432,000,000

There are two other tracts of land large enough to be considered continents, and one tract which is borderline and is usually considered too small to be a continent. These are, in order of decreasing area; Antarctica, Australia, and Greenland.

Since Greenland is almost uninhabited, I would like (as a pure formality) to lump it in with the group of what we might call "continental-islands" just to get it out of the way. We can then turn to the bodies of land smaller than Greenland and concentrate on these as a group.

Table 3 lists the data on the continental-islands.

Table 3—The Continental-Islands

	Area (square miles)	*Population*
The World Island	31,800,000	2,510,000,000
The New World Island	16,420,000	432,000,000
Antarctica	5,100,000	———
Australia	2,970,000	11,000,000
Greenland	840,000	25,000

The bodies of land that remain, all smaller than Greenland, are what we usually refer to when we speak of "islands." From here on in,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

then, when I speak of "islands" in this essay, I mean bodies of land smaller than Greenland and entirely surrounded by the sea.

There are many thousands of such islands and they represent a portion of the land surface of the globe that is by no means negligible. Altogether (as nearly as I can estimate it) the islands have a total area of about 2,500,000 square miles—so that in combination they are continental in size, having almost the area of Australia. The total population is about 350,000,000, which is even more clearly continental in size, being well above the total population of North America.

Let's put it this way, one human being out of every ten lives on an island smaller than Greenland.

There are some useful statistics we can bring up in connection with the islands. First and most obvious is the matter of area. The five largest islands in terms of area are listed in Table 4.

Table 4—The Largest Islands

	Area (square miles)
New Guinea	312,329
Borneo	290,285
Madagascar	230,035
Baffin	201,600
Sumatra	163,145

The largest island, New Guinea, spreads out over an extreme length of 1600 miles. If superimposed on the United States, it would stretch from New York to Denver. In area, it is 15 percent larger than Texas. It has the largest and tallest mountain range outside those on the World Island and the New World Island, and some of the most primitive people in the world.

Two other islands of the first five are members of the same group as New Guinea. It, Borneo and Sumatra are all part of what used to be called the "East Indies" an archipelago stretching across 4,000 miles of ocean between Asia and Australia, and making up by far the largest island grouping in the world. The archipelago has an area of nearly 1,000,000 square miles, and thus contains about 40 percent of all the island area in the world. The archipelago bears a population of perhaps 103,000,000, or about 30 percent that of all the island population in the world.

In a way, Madagascar is like an East Indian island displaced 4000

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

miles westward to the other end of the Indian Ocean. It has roughly the shape of Sumatra and in size is midway between Sumatra and Borneo. Even its native population is more closely akin to those of southeast Asia than to those of nearby Africa.

Only Baffin Island of the five giants falls outside this pattern. It is a member of the archipelago lying to the north of Canada. It is located between the mouth of Hudson Bay and the coast of Greenland.

Oddly enough, not one of the five largest islands is a giant in respect to population. There are three islands, indeed, (not one of which is among the five largest), which, among them, contain well over half of all the island people in the world. The most populous is probably not known by name to very many Americans. It is Honshu and, before you register a blank, let me explain that it is the largest of the Japanese islands, the one on which Tokyo is located.

The three islands are given in Table 5.

Table 5—The Most Populous Islands

	Area (square miles)	*Rank*	*Population*
Honshu	91,278	6	72,000,000
Java	48,504	12	66,000,000
Great Britain	88,133	7	54,000,000

Java is easily the most densely populated of the large islands. (I say "large islands" in order to exclude islands such as Manhattan.) It has a density of 1,350 people per square mile which makes it just eight times as densely populated as Europe. It is 1½ times as densely populated as Belgium, Europe's most thickly-peopled nation. This is all the more remarkable since Belgium is highly industrialized and Java is largely agricultural. After all, one usually expects an industrialized area to support a larger population than an agricultural one would. (And, to be sure, Belgium's standard of living is much higher than Java's.)

Lagging far behind the big three, are four other islands, each with more than ten million population. These are given in Table 6. (Kyushu, by the way, is another of the Japanese islands.)

Notice that the seven most populous islands are all in the Eastern Hemisphere, all lying off the World Island or between the World Island and Australia. The most populous island of the Western Hemisphere is again one which most Americans probably can't name. It is

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Hispaniola, the island on which Haiti and the Dominican Republic are located. Its population is 7,900,000.

Table 6—Moderately-Populous Islands

	Area (square miles)	*Rank*	*Population*
Kyushu	14,791	30	13,000,000
Sumatra	163,145	5	12,500,000
Formosa	13,855	24	12,000,000
Ceylon	25,332	14	10,600,000

One generally thinks of great powers as located on the continents. All but one in history among the continental great powers were located on the World Island. The one exception is, of course, the United States.

The great exception to the rule of continentalism among the great powers is, of course, Great Britain.* In more recent times, Japan proved another. In fact, Great Britain and Japan are the only island-nations that have been completely independent throughout medieval and modern history.

Nowadays, however (unless I have miscounted and I am sure that if I have I will be quickly enlightened by a number of Gentle Readers) there are no less than nineteen island nations; nineteen independent nations, that is, whose territory is to be found on an island or group of islands, and who lack any significant base on either the World Island or the New World Island.

One of these nations, Australia, is actually a continent-nation by ordinary convention, but I'll include it here to be complete. The nineteen island nations (including Australia) are listed in Table 7, in order of population.

Some little explanatory points should accompany this table. First the discrepancy between Great Britain's area as an island and as a nation is caused by the fact that as a nation it includes certain regions outside its home island, notably Northern Ireland. Indonesia includes most but not all the archipelago I previously referred to as the East Indies. Nationalist China occupies the island of Formosa, and Malagasy occupies the island of Madagascar.

Virtually all the island people are now part of independent island-

* *I'm not going to distinguish between England, Great Britain, the United Kingdom, and the British Isles. I can if I want to, though, never you fear!*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

nations. The largest islands (or parts of islands) I can think of that are still colonies in the old sense are the eastern half of New Guinea (pop. 2,000,000) which belongs to Australia; and Mauritius (pop. 721,000) and the Fiji Islands (pop. 435,000) which belong to Great Britain. I frankly don't know how to classify Puerto Rico. It is self-governing to a considerable extent but if it is counted as an American colony, I think it may qualify as the most populous (pop. 2,350,000) nonindependent island remaining.

Table 7—The Island Nations

	Area (square miles)	*Population*
Indonesia	735,268	100,750,000
Japan	142,726	96,560,000
Great Britain	94,220	53,673,000
Philippines	115,707	30,758,000
China, Nationalist	13,885	11,884,000
Australia	2,971,021	11,023,000
Ceylon	25,332	10,624,000
Cuba	44,218	7,336,000
Malagasy	230,035	5,940,000
Haiti	10,714	4,448,000
Dominican Republic	18,816	3,452,000
Ireland	27,135	2,841,000
New Zealand	103,736	2,591,000
Jamaica	4,232	1,706,000
Trinidad and Tobago	1,980	930,000
Cyprus	3,572	591,000
Malta	122	326,000
Iceland	39,768	187,000
Western Samoa	1,097	119,000

As you see from Table 7, the most populous island nation is neither Japan nor Great Gritain, but Indonesia. It is, in fact, the fifth most populous nation in the world. Only China, India, the Soviet Union, and the United States (all giants in area) are more populous than Indonesia.

The only island nations that occupy less than a single island are Haiti and the Dominican Republic (which share Hispaniola) and Ireland, where the six northeastern counties are still part of Great Britain. The only island nation which has part of its islands belonging to nations based on some continent is Indonesia. Part of the island of Borneo (most of which is Indonesian) makes up a portion of the new

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

nation of Malaysia, based on nearby Asia. The eastern half of New Guinea (the western half of which is Indonesian) belongs to Australia, and the northeastern half of the small Indonesian island of Timor belongs to Portugal.

Indonesia has another distinction. It is the only nation to have withdrawn voluntarily from the United Nations.

Western Samoa, on the other hand, is the only nation among those who have achieved independence since World War II to have voluntarily decided not to join the United Nations in the first place.

There are seventeen cities within these island nations which contain one million or more people. These are listed, in order of decreasing population, in Table 8—and I warn you that some of the figures are not particularly trustworthy.

Table 8—The Island Cities

City	*Nation*	*Population*
Tokyo	Japan	10,400,000
London	Great Britain	8,350,000
Djakarta	Indonesia	2,975,000
Osaka	Japan	2,940,000
Sydney	Australia	2,220,000
Melbourne	Australia	1,900,000
Nagoya	Japan	1,550,000
Kyoto	Japan	1,400,000
Yokohama	Japan	1,320,000
Havana	Cuba	1,250,000
Birmingham	Great Britain	1,200,000
Manila	Philippines	1,140,000
Surabaja	Indonesia	1,135,000
Kobe	Japan	1,120,000
Glasgow	Great Britain	1,100,000
Bandung	Indonesia	1,000,000
Taipei	Nationalist China	1,000,000

Of these, Tokyo is certainly remarkable since it may be the largest city in the world. I say "may be" because there is a second candidate for the post—Shanghai. Population statistics for the Chinese People's Republic (Communist China) are shaky indeed but there is a possibility that the population of Shanghai—a continental city—may be as high as 10,700,000.

New York City, the largest city on the New World Island is no bet-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ter than a good fourth, behind Tokyo, Shanghai, and Greater London. New York is located mostly on islands, of course. Only one of its boroughs, the Bronx, is indisputably on the mainland. Still it is not on an island in the same sense that Tokyo or London are.

If we exclude New York as a doubtful case, then the largest island city in the Western Hemisphere, and the only one in that half of the world to have a population of over a million, is Havana.

That leaves only one item. In restricting the discussion of islands to those which are surrounded by salt water, have we been forced to neglect any important fresh water islands?

In terms of size (rather than population) there is only one that is worth mentioning. It is a river island that very few in the world (outside Brazil) can be aware of. It is the island of Marajo which nestles like a huge basketball in the recess formed by the mouth of the Amazon River.

It is 100 miles across and has an area of 14,000 square miles. It is larger than Formosa and if it were counted among the true islands of the sea it would be the 33rd largest island in the world, which is certainly not bad for a river island. However, it is a low-lying piece of land, swampy, often flooded, and right on the equator. Hardly anyone lives there.

Its mere existence, though, shows what a monster of a river the Amazon is.—But we're not discussing rivers now; perhaps another time.

SPECIAL ISAAC ASIMOV ISSUE

F&SF is pleased to announce that our 17th anniversary issue (October) will be devoted in large measure to the work of Isaac Asimov. Among the features already assembled for the issue is a brand-new novelette by the Good Doctor. More details later. Meanwhile, by filling out and dispatching the coupon on page 62, you can be sure of not missing the special Asimov issue.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

This is the fourth in Jack Vance's series about a unique and reluctant adventurer named Cugel the Clever. (Again, we emphasize that each novelet is complete and may be enjoyed without reference to the preceding stories.) If you have yet to encounter Cugel in these pages, you have missed a truly unusual and delightful reading experience. This omission may be immediately repaired by turning to the story below.

THE PILGRIMS

by Jack Vance

1: AT THE INN

FOR THE BETTER PART OF A DAY Cugel had traveled a dreary waste where nothing grew but salt-grass; then, only a few minutes before sunset, he arrived at the bank of a broad slow river, beside which ran a road. A half-mile to his right stood a tall structure of timber and dark brown stucco, evidently an inn. The sight gave Cugel vast satisfaction, for he had eaten nothing the whole of the day, and had spent the previous night in a tree. Ten minutes later he pushed open the heavy iron-bound door, and entered the inn.

He stood in a vestibule. To either side were diamond-paned casements, burnt lavender with age, where the setting sun scattered a thousand refractions. From the common room came the cheerful hum of voices, the clank of pottery and glass, the smell of ancient wood, waxed tile, leather and simmering cauldrons. Cugel stepped forward to find a score of men gathered about the fire, drinking wine and exchanging the large talk of travelers.

The landlord stood behind a counter: a stocky man hardly as tall as Cugel's shoulder, with a high-domed bald head, a black beard hanging a foot below his chin. His eyes were protuberant

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and heavy-lidded; his expression was as placid and calm as the flow of the river. At Cugel's request for accomodation he dubiously pulled at his nose. "Already I am over-extended, with pilgrims upon the route to Erze Damath. Those you see upon the benches are not even half of all I must lodge this night. I will put down a pallet in the hall, if such will content you; I can do no more."

Cugel gave a sigh of fretful dissatisfaction. "This fails to meet my expectations. I strongly desire a private chamber with a couch of good quality, a window overlooking the river, a heavy carpet to muffle the songs and slogans of the pot-room."

"I fear that you will be disappointed," said the landlord without emotion. "The single chamber of this description is already occupied, by that man with the yellow beard sitting yonder: a certain Lodermulch, also traveling to Erze Damath."

"Perhaps, on the plea of emergency, you might persuade him to vacate the chamber and occupy the pallet in my stead," suggested Cugel.

"I doubt if he is capable of such abnegation," the inkeeper replied. "But why not put the inquiry yourself? I, frankly, do not wish to broach the matter."

Cugel, surveying Lodermulch's strongly-marked features, his muscular arms and the somewhat disdainful manner in which he listened to the talk of the pilgrims, was inclined to join the innkeeper in his assessment of Lodermulch's character, and made no move to press the request. "It seems that I must occupy the pallet. Now, as to my supper: I require a fowl, suitably stuffed, trussed, roasted and garnished, accompanied by whatever side-dishes your kitchen affords.

"My kitchen is overtaxed and you must eat lentils with the pilgrims," said the landlord. "A single fowl is on hand, and this again has been reserved to the order of Lodermulch, for his evening repast."

Cugel shrugged in vexation. "No matter. I will wash the dust of travel from my face, and then take a goblet of wine."

"To the rear is flowing water and a trough occasionally used for this purpose. I furnish unguents, pungent oils and hot cloths at extra charge."

"The water will suffice." Cugel walked to the rear of the inn where he found a basin. After washing he looked about and noticed at some small distance a shed, stoutly constructed of timber. He started back into the inn, then halted, once more examined the shed. He crossed the intervening area, opened the door, looked within; then, engrossed in thought, he returned to the common room. The landlord served him a mug of

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

mulled wine, which he took to an inconspicuous bench.

Lodermulch had been asked his opinion of the so-called Funambulous Evangels, who, refusing to place their feet upon the ground, went about their tasks by tightrope. In a curt voice Lodermulch exposed the fallacies of this particular doctrine. "They reckon the age of the earth at twenty-nine aeons, rather than the customary twenty-three. They stipulate that for every square ell of soil two and one quarter million men have died and laid down their dust, thus creating a dank and ubiquitous mantle of lich-mold, upon which it is sacrilege to walk. The argument has a superficial plausibility, but consider: the dust of one dessicated corpse, spread over a square ell, affords a layer one thirty-third of an inch in depth. The total therefore represents almost one mile of compacted corpse-dust mantling the earth's surface, which is manifestly false."

A member of the sect, who, without access to his customary ropes, walked in cumbersome ceremonial shoes, made an excited expostulation. "You speak with neither logic nor comprehension! How can you be so absolute?"

Lodermulch raised his tufted eyebrows in surly displeasure. "Must I really expatiate? At the ocean's shore, does a cliff one mile in altitude follow the demarcation between land and sea? No. Everywhere is inequality. Headlands extend into the water; more often beaches of pure white sand are found. Nowhere are the massive buttresses of grey-white turf upon which the doctrines of your sect depend."

"Inconsequential claptrap!" sputtered the Funambule.

"What is this?" demanded Lodermulch, expanding his massive chest. "I am not accustomed to derision!"

"No derision, but hard and cold refutal of your dogmatism! We claim that a proportion of the dust is blown into the ocean, a portion hangs suspended in the air, a portion seeps through crevices into underground caverns, and another portion is absorbed by trees, grasses and certain insects, so that little more than a half-mile of ancestral sediment covers the earth, upon which it is sacrilege to tread. Why are not the cliffs you mention everywhere visible? Because of that moistness exhaled and expelled by innumerable men of the past. This has raised the ocean an exact equivalence, so that no brink or precipice can be noted; and herein lies your fallacy."

"Bah," muttered Lodermulch, turning away. "Somewhere there is a flaw in your concepts."

"By no means!" asserted the evangel, with that fervor which distinguished his kind. "Therefore, from respect to the dead, we walk aloft, on ropes and edges, and

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

when we must travel, we use specially sanctified footgear."

During the conversation Cugel had departed the room. Now a moon-faced stripling wearing the smock of a porter approached the group. "You are the worthy Lodermulch?" he asked the person so designated.

Lodermulch squared about in his chair. "I am he."

"I bear a message, from one who has brought certain sums of money due you. He waits in a small shed behind the inn."

Lodermulch frowned incredulously. "You are certain that this person required Lodermulch, Provost of Barlig Township?"

"Indeed, sir, the name was specifically so."

"And what man bore the message?"

"He was a tall man, wearing a voluminous hood, and described himself as one of your intimates."

"Indeed," ruminated Lodermulch. "Tyzog, perhaps? Or conceivably Krednip. . . . Why would they not approach me directly? No doubt there is some good reason." He heaved his bulk erect. "I suppose I must investigate."

He stalked from the common room, circled the inn, and looked through the dim light toward the shed. "Ho there!" he called. "Tyzog? Krednip? Come forth!"

There was no response. Lodermulch went to peer into the shed. As soon as he had stepped within, Cugel came around from the rear, slammed shut the door, threw bar and bolts.

Ignoring the muffled pounding and angry calls, Cugel returned to the inn. He sought out the innkeeper. "An alteration in arrangements: Lodermulch has been called away. He will require neither his chamber nor his roast fowl and has kindly urged both upon me!"

The innkeeper pulled at his beard, went to the door, looked up and down the road. Slowly he returned. "Extraordinary! He has paid for both and made no representations regarding rebate."

"We arranged a settlement to our mutual satisfaction. To recompense you for extra effort, I now pay an additional three terces."

The innkeeper shrugged, took the coins. "It is all the same to me. Come, I will lead you to the chamber."

Cugel inspected the chamber and was well satisfied. Presently his supper was served. The roast fowl was beyond reproach, as were the additional dishes Lodermulch had ordered and which the landlord included with the meal.

Before retiring Cugel strolled behind the inn and satisfied himself that the bar at the door of the shed was in good order and that Lodermulch's hoarse calls were unlikely to attract attention. He rapped sharply on the door. "Peace, Lodermulch!" he called

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

out sternly. "This is I, the innkeeper! Do not bellow so loudly; you will disturb my guests!"

Without waiting for reply, Cugel returned to the common room, where he fell into conversation with the leader of the pilgrim band. This was Garstang, a man spare and taut, with a waxen skin, a fragile skull, hooded eyes, a meticulous nose so thin as to be translucent when impinged across a light. Addressing him as a man of experience and erudition, Cugel inquired the route to Almery, but Garstang tended to believe the region sheerly imaginary.

Cugel asserted otherwise. "Almery is a region distinct; I vouch for this personally."

"Your knowledge, then, is more profound than my own," stated Garstang. "This river is the Asc; the land to this side is Sudun, across is Lelias. To the south lies Erze Damath, where you would be wise to travel, thence perhaps west across the Silver Desert and the Songan Sea, where you might make new inquiry."

"I will do as you suggest," said Cugel.

"We, devout Gilfigites all, are bound for Erze Damath and the Lustral Rite at the Black Obelisk," said Garstang. "Since the route lies through wastes we are banded together against the erbs and gids. If you wish to join the group, to share both privileges and restrictions, you are welcome."

"The privileges are self-evident," said Cugel. "As to the restrictions?"

"Merely to obey the commands of the leader, which is to say, myself, and contribute a share of the expenses."

"I agree, without qualification," said Cugel.

"Excellent! We march on the morrow at dawn." Garstang pointed out certain other members of the group, which numbered fifty-seven. "There is Vitz, locutor to our little band, and there sits Casmyre, the theoretician. The man with iron teeth is Arlo, and he of the blue hat and silver buckle is Voynod, a wizard of no small repute. Absent from the room is the estimable though agnostic Lodermulch, as well as the unequivocally devout Subucule. Perhaps they seek to sway each other's convictions. The two who game with dice are Parso and Salanave. There is Hant, there Cray." Garstang named several others, citing their attributes. At last Cugel, pleading fatigue, repaired to his chamber. He relaxed upon the couch and at once fell asleep.

During the small hours he was subjected to a disturbance. Lodermulch, digging into the floor of the shed, then burrowing under the wall, had secured his freedom, and went at once to the inn. First he tried the door to Cugel's chamber which Cugel had been at pains to lock.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Who is there?" called Cugel.

"Open! It is I, Lodermulch. This is the chamber where I wish to sleep!"

"By no means," declared Cugel. "I paid a princely sum to secure a bed, and was even forced to wait while the landlord evicted a previous tenant. Be off with you now; I suspect that you are drunk; if you wish further revelry, rouse the wine-steward."

Lodermulch stamped away. Cugel lay back once more.

Presently he heard the thud of blows, and the landlord's cry as Lodermulch seized his beard. Lodermulch was eventually thrust from the inn, by the joint efforts of the innkeeper, his spouse, the porter, the pot-boy and others; whereupon Cugel gratefully returned to sleep.

Before dawn the pilgrims, together with Cugel, arose and took their breakfast. The innkeeper seemed somewhat sullen of mood, and displayed bruises, but he put no questions to Cugel, who in his turn initiated no conversation.

After breakfast the pilgrims assembled in the road, where they were joined by Lodermulch, who had spent the night pacing up and down the road.

Garstang made a count of the group, then blew a great blast on his whistle. The pilgrims marched forward, across the bridge, and set off along the south bank of the Asc toward Erze Damath.

2: THE RAFT ON THE RIVER

For three days the pilgrims proceeded beside the Asc, at night sleeping behind a barricade evoked by the wizard Voynod from a circlet of ivory slivers: a precaution of necessity, for beyond the bars, barely visible by the rays of the fire, were creatures anxious to join the company: deodands softly pleading, erbs shifting posture back and forth from four feet to two, comfortable in neither style. Once a gid attempted to leap the barricade; on another occasion three hoons joined to thrust against the posts—backing off, racing forward, to strike with grunts of effort, while from within the pilgrims watched in fascination.

Cugel stepped close, to touch a flaming brand to one of the heaving shapes, and elicited a scream of fury. A great gray arm snatched through the gap; Cugel jumped back for his life. The barricade held and presently the creatures fell to quarreling and departed.

On the evening of the third day the party came to the confluence of the Asc with a great slow river which Garstang identified as the Scamander. Nearby stood a forest of tall baldamas, pines and spinth oaks. With the help of local woodcutters trees were felled, trimmed, conveyed to the water's edge, where a raft was fabricated. With all the pilgrims aboard, the raft was poled out into the current

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

where it drifted down-stream in ease and silence.

For five days the raft moved on the broad Scamander, sometimes almost out of sight of the banks, sometimes gliding close beside the reeds which lined the shore. With nothing better to do the pilgrims engaged in lengthy disputations, and the diversity of opinion upon every issue was remarkable. As often as not the talk explored metaphysical arcana, or the subtleties of Gilfigite principle.

Subucule, the most devout of the pilgrims, stated his credo in detail. Essentially he professed the orthodox Gilfigite theosophy, in which Zo Zam, the eight-headed deity, after creating cosmos, struck off his toe, which then became Gilfig, while the drops of blood dispersed to form the eight races of mankind. Roremaund, a skeptic, attacked the doctrine: "Who created this hypothetical 'creator' of yours? Another 'creator'? Far simpler merely to presuppose the end product: in this case, a blinking sun and a dying earth!" To which Subucule cited the Gilfigite Text in crushing refutal.

One named Bluner staunchly propounded his own creed. He believed the sun to be a cell in the corpus of a great deity, who had created the cosmos in a process analogous to the growth of a lichen along a rock.

Subucule considered the thesis over-elaborate: "If the sun were a cell, what then becomes the nature of the earth?"

"An animalcule deriving nutriment," replied Bluner. "Such dependencies are known elsewhere and need not evoke astonishment."

"What then attacks the sun?" demanded Vitz in scorn. "Another animalcule similar to earth?"

Bluner began a detailed exposition of his organon, but before long was interrupted by Pralixus, a tall, thin man with piercing green eyes. "Listen to me; I know all; my doctrine is simplicity itself. A vast number of conditions are possible, and there are an even greater number of impossibilities. Our cosmos is a possible condition: it exists. Why? Time is infinite, which is to say that every possible condition must come to pass. Since we reside in this particular possibility and know of no other, we arrogate to ourselves the quality of singleness. In truth, any universe which is possible sooner or later, not once but many times, will exist."

"I tend to a similar doctrine, though a devout Gilfigite," stated Casmyre the theoretician. "My philosophy presupposes a succession of creators, each absolute in his own right. To paraphrase the learned Pralixus, if a deity is possible, it must exist! Only impossible deities will not exist! The eight-headed Zo Zam who struck off his Divine Toe is possible, and hence exists."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Subucule blinked, opened his mouth to speak, then closed it once more. Roremaund, the skeptic, turned away to inspect the waters of the Scamander.

Garstang, sitting to the side, smiled thoughtfully. "And you, Cugel the Clever, for once you are reticent. What is your belief?"

"It is somewhat inchoate," Cugel admitted. "I have assimilated a variety of viewpoints, each authoritative in its own right: from the priests at the Temple of Teleologues; from a bewitched bird who plucked messages from a box; from a fasting anchorite who drank a bottle of pink elixir which I offered him in jest. The resulting visions were contradictory but of great profundity. My world-scheme, hence, is syncretic."

"Interesting," said Garstang. "Lodermulch, what of you?"

"Ha," growled Lodermulch. "Notice this rent in my garment; I am at a loss to explain its presence! I am even more puzzled by the existence of the universe."

Others spoke. Voynod the wizard defined the known cosmos as the shadow of a region ruled by ghosts, themselves dependent for existence upon the psychic energies of men. The devout Subucule denounced this scheme as contrary to the Protocols of Gilfig.

The argument continued at length. Cugel and one or two others including Lodermulch became bored and instituted a game of chance, using dice and cards and counters. The stakes, originally nominal, began to grow. Lodermulch at first won scantily, then lost ever greater sums, while Cugel won stake after stake. Lodermulch presently flung down the dice and seizing Cugel's elbow shook it, to dislodge several additional dice from the cuff of his jacket. "Well then!" bawled Lodermulch, "what have we here? I thought to detect knavery, and here is justification! Return my money on the instant!"

"How can you say so?" demanded Cugel. "Where have you demonstrated chicanery? I carry dice, what of that? Am I required to throw my property into the Scamander, before engaging in a game? You demean my reputation!"

"I care nothing for this," retorted Lodermulch. "I merely wish the return of my money."

"Impossible," said Cugel. "For all your bluster you have proved no malfeasance."

"Proof?" roared Lodermulch. "Need there be further? Notice these dice, all askew, some with identical markings on three sides, others rolling only with great effort, so heavy are they at one edge."

"Curious only," explained Cugel. He indicated Voynod the wizard, who had been watching. "Here is a man as keen of eye as he is agile of brain; ask if any illicit transaction was evident."

"None was evident," stated Voynod. "In my estimation Loder-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

mulch has made an over-hasty accusation."

Garstang came forward, and heard the controversy. He spoke in a voice both judicious and conciliatory: "Trust is essential in a company such as ours, comrades and devout Gilfigites all. There can be no question of malice or deceit! Surely, Lodermulch, you have misjudged our friend Cugel!"

Lodermulch laughed harshly. "If this is conduct characteristic of the devout, I am fortunate not to have fallen in with ordinary folk!" With this remark, he took himself to a corner of the raft where, seating himself, he fixed Cugel with a glance of menace and loathing.

Garstang shook his head in distress. "I fear Lodermulch has been offended. Perhaps, Cugel, if in a spirit of amity you were to return his gold—"

Cugel made a firm refusal. "It is a matter of principle. Lodermulch has assailed my most valuable possession, which is to say, my honor."

"Your nicety is commendable," said Garstang, "and Lodermulch has behaved tactlessly. Still, for the sake of good-fellowship—no? Well, I cannot argue the point. Ha hum. Always small troubles to fret us." Shaking his head he departed.

Cugel gathered his winnings, together with the dice which Lodermulch had dislodged from his sleeve. "An unsettling incident," he told Voynod. "A boor, this Lodermulch! He has offended everyone; all have quit the game."

"Perhaps because all the money is in your possession," Voynod suggested.

Cugel examined his winnings with an air of surprise. "I never suspected that they were so substantial! Perhaps you will accept this sum to spare me the effort of carrying it?"

Voynod acquiesced and a share of the winnings changed hands.

Not long after, while the raft floated placidly along the river, the sun gave an alarming pulse. A purple film formed upon the surface like tarnish, then dissolved. Certain of the pilgrims ran back and forth in alarm, crying: "The sun goes dark! Prepare for the chill!"

Garstang however held up his hands in reassurance. "Calm, all! The quaver has departed, the sun is as before!"

"Think!" urged Subucule with great earnestness. "Would Gilfig allow this cataclysm, even while we travel to worship at the Black Obelisk?"

The group became quiet, though each had his personal interpretation of the event. Vitz, the locutor, saw an analogy to the blurring of vision, which might be cured by vigorous blinking. Voynod declared: "If all goes well at Erze Damath, I plan to dedicate the next four years of life to a scheme

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

for replenishing the vigor of the sun!" Lodermulch merely made an offensive statement to the effect that for all of him the sun could go dark, with the pilgrims forced to grope their way to the Lustral Rites.

But the sun shone on as before. The raft drifted along the great Scamander where the banks were now so low and devoid of vegetation as to seem distant dark lines. The day passed and the sun seemed to settle into the river itself, projecting a great maroon glare, which gradually went dull and dark as the sun vanished.

In the twilight a fire was built, around which the pilgrims gathered to eat their supper. There was discussion of the sun's alarming flicker, and much speculation along eschatological lines. Subucule relinquished all responsibility for life, death, the future and past to Gilfig. Haxt, however, declared that he would feel easier if Gilfig had heretofore displayed a more expert control over the affairs of the world. For a period the talk became intense. Subucule accused Haxt of superficiality while Haxt used such words as "credulity" and "blind abasement." Garstang intervened to point out that as yet all facts were not known, and that the Lustral Rites at the Black Obelisk might clarify the situation.

The next morning a great weir was noted ahead: a line of stout poles obstructing navigation of the river. At one area only was passage possible, and even this gap was closed by a heavy iron chain. The pilgrims allowed the raft to float close to this gap, then dropped the stone which served as an anchor. From a nearby hut appeared a zealot, long of hair and gaunt of limb, wearing tattered black robes and flourishing an iron staff. He sprang out along the weir to gaze threateningly down at those aboard the raft. "Go back, go back!" he shouted. "The passage of the river is under my control; I permit none to go by!"

Garstang stepped forward. "I beg your indulgence! We are a group of pilgrims, bound for the Lustral Rites at Erze Damath. If necessary we will pay a fee to pass this weir, though we trust that in your generosity you will remit the toll."

The zealot gave a cry of harsh laughter and waved his iron staff. "My fee may not be remitted! I demand the life of the most evil in your company—unless one among you can to my satisfaction demonstrate his virtue!" And legs astraddle, black robe flapping in the wind, he stood glaring down at the raft.

Among the pilgrims was a stir of uneasiness, and all looked furtively at one another. There was a mutter, which presently became a confusion of assertions and claims. Casmyre's strident tones at last

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

rang forth. "It cannot be I who am most evil! My life has been clement and austere and during the gambling I ignored an ignoble advantage."

Another called out: "I am even more virtuous, who eat only dry pulses for fear of taking life."

Another: "I am even of greater nicety, for I subsist solely upon the discarded husks of these same pulses, and bark which has fallen from trees, for fear of destroying even vegetative vitality."

Another: "My stomach refuses vegetable matter, but I uphold the same exalted ideals and allow only carrion to pass my lips."

Another: "I once swam on a lake of fire to notify an old woman that the calamity she dreaded was unlikely to occur."

Cugel declared: "My life is incessant humility, and I am unswerving in my dedication to justice and equivalence, even though I fare the worse for my pains."

Voynod was no less staunch: "I am a wizard, true, but I devote my skill only to the amelioration of public woe."

Now it was Garstang's turn: "My virtue is of the quintessential sort, being distilled from the erudition of the ages. How can I be other than virtuous? I am dispassionate to the ordinary motives of mankind."

Finally all had spoken save Lodermulch, who stood to the side, a sour grin on his face. Voynod pointed a finger. "Speak, Lodermulch! Prove your virtue, or else be judged most evil, with the consequent forfeit of your life!"

Lodermulch laughed. He turned, made a great jump which carried him to an outlying member of the weir. He scrambled to the parapet and drawing his sword, threatened the zealot. "We are all evil together, you as well as we, for enforcing this absurd condition. Relax the chain, or prepare to face my sword."

The zealot flung high his arms. "My condition is fulfilled; you, Lodermulch, have demonstrated your virtue. The raft may proceed. In addition, since you employ your sword in the defense of honor, I now bestow upon you this salve, which when applied to your blade enables it to slice steel or rock as easily as butter. Away then, and may all profit by the lustral devotions!"

Lodermulch accepted the salve and returned to the raft. The chain was relaxed and the raft slid without hindrance past the weir.

Garstang approached Lodermulch to voice measured approval for his act. He added a caution: "In this case an impulsive, indeed almost insubordinate, act redounded to the general benefit. If a similar circumstance arises in the future it would be well to take counsel with others of proved sagacity: myself, Casmyre, Voynod or Subucule."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Lodermulch grunted indifferently. "As you wish, so long as the delay involves me in no personal inconvenience." And Garstang was forced to be content with this.

The other pilgrims eyed Lodermulch with dissatisfaction, and drew themselves somewhat apart, so that Lodermulch sat by himself at the forward part of the raft.

Afternoon came, then sunset, evening and night; when morning arrived it was seen that Lodermulch had disappeared.

There was general puzzlement. Garstang made inquiries, but none could throw light upon the mystery, and there was no general consensus as to what in fact had occasioned the disappearance.

Strangely enough, the departure of the unpopular Lodermulch failed to restore the original cheer and fellowship to the group. Thereafter each of the pilgrims sat dourly silent, casting glances to left and right; there were no further games, nor philosophical discussions, and Garstang's announcement that Erze Damath lay a single day's journey ahead aroused no great enthusiasm.

3: ERZE DAMATH

On the last night aboard the raft a semblance of the old cameraderie returned. Vitz the locutor performed a number of vocal exercises and Cugel demonstrated a high-kneed capering dance typical of the lobster fisherman of Kauchique, where he had passed his youth. Voynod in his turn performed a few simple metamorphoses, and then displayed a small silver ring. He signaled Haxt. "Touch this with your tongue, press it to your forehead, then look through."

"I see a procession!" exclaimed Haxt. "Men and women by the hundreds, and thousands, marching past. My mother and father walk before, then my grandparents —but who are the others?"

"Your ancestors," declared Voynod, "each in his characteristic costume, back to the primordial homuncule from which all of us are derived." He retrieved the ring, and reaching into his pouch brought forth a dull blue and green gem. "Watch now, as I fling this jewel into the Scamander!" And he tossed the gem off to the side. It flickered through the air and splashed into the dark water. "Now, I merely fold forth my palm, and the gem returns!" And indeed, as the company watched there was a wet sparkle across the firelight and upon Voynod's palm rested the gem. "With this gem a man need never fear penury. True, it is of no great value, but he can sell it repeatedly. . . . What else shall I show you? This small amulet perhaps. Frankly an erotic appurtenance, it arouses intense emotion in that person toward

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

whom the potency is directed. One must be cautious in its use; and indeed, I have here an indispensable ancillary: a periapt in the shape of a ram's head, fashioned to the order of Emperor Dalmasmius the Tender, that he might not injure the sensibilities of any of his ten thousand concubines. . . . What else can I display? Here: my wand, which instantly affixes any object to any other. I keep it carefully sheathed so that I do not inadvertently weld trouser to buttock or pouch to fingertip. The object has many uses. What else? Let us see. . . . Ah, here! A horn of singular quality. When thrust into the mouth of a corpse, it stimulates the utterance of twenty final words. Inserted into the cadaver's ear it allows the transmission of information into the lifeless brain. . . . What have we here? Yes indeed: a small device which has brought much pleasure!" And Voynod displayed a doll which performed a heroic declamation, sang a somewhat raffish song and engaged in repartee with Cugel, who squatted close in front, watching all with great attentiveness.

At last Voynod tired of his display, and the pilgrims one by one reposed themselves to sleep.

Cugel lay awake, hands behind his head, staring up at the stars, thinking of Voynod's unexpectedly large collection of thaumaturgical instruments and devices.

When satisfied that all were asleep, he arose to his feet and inspected the sleeping form of Voynod. The pouch was securely locked and tucked under Voynod's arm, much as Cugel had expected. Going to the little pantry where stores were kept he secured a quantity of lard, which he mixed with flour to produce a white salve. From a fragment of heavy paper he folded a small box, which he filled with the salve. He then returned to his couch.

On the following morning he contrived that Voynod, as if by accident, should see him anointing his sword blade with the salve.

Voynod became instantly horrified. "It cannot be! I am astounded! Alas, poor Lodermulch!"

Cugel signaled him to silence. "What are you saying?" he muttered. "I merely protect my sword against rust."

Voynod shook his head with inexorable determination. "All is clear! For the sake of gain you have murdered Lodermulch! I have no choice but to lodge an information with the thief-takers at Erze Damath!"

Cugel made an imploring gesture. "Do not be hasty! You have mistaken all; I am innocent!"

Voynod, a tall saturnine man with a purple flush under his eyes, a long chin and a tall pinched forehead, held up his hand. "I have never been one to tolerate homicide. The principle of equivalence

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

must in this case apply, and a rigorous requittal is necessary. At minimum, the evil-doer may never profit by his act!"

"You refer to the slave?" inquired Cugel delicately.

"Precisely," said Voynod. "Justice demands no less."

"You are a stern man," exclaimed Cugel in distress. "I have no choice but submit to your judgment."

Voynod extended his hand. "The salve then, and since you are obviously overcome by remorse, I will say no more of the matter."

Cugel pursed his lips reflectively. "So be it. I have already anointed my sword. Therefore I will sacrifice the remainder of the salve in exchange for your erotic appurtenance and its ancillary, together with several lesser talismans."

"Do I hear correctly?" stormed Voynod. "Your arrogance transcends all! Such effectuants are beyond value!"

Cugel shrugged. "This salve is by no means an ordinary article of commerce."

After dispute Cugel relinquished the salve in return for a tube which projected blue concentrate to a distance of fifty paces, together with a scroll listing eighteen phases of the Laganetic Cycle; and with these items he was forced to be content.

Not long afterward the outlying ruins of Erze Damath appeared upon the western banks: ancient villas now toppled and forlorn among overgrown gardens.

The pilgrims plied poles to urge the raft toward the shore. In the distance appeared the tip of the Black Obelisk, at which all emitted a glad cry. The raft moved slantwise across the Scamander and was presently docked at one of the crumbling old jetties.

The pilgrims scrambled ashore, to gather around Garstang, who addressed the group: "It is with vast satisfaction that I find myself discharged of responsibility. Behold! The holy city where Gilfig issued the Gneustic Dogma! Where he scourged Kazue and denounced Enxis the Witch! Not impossibly the sacred feet have trod this very soil!" Garstang made a dramatic gesture toward the ground, and the pilgrims, looking downward, shuffled their feet uneasily. "Be that as it may, we are here and each of us must feel relief. The way was tedious and not without peril. Fifty-nine set forth from Pholgus Valley. Bamish and Randol were taken by grues at Sagma Field; by the bridge across the Asc Cugel joined us; upon the Scamander we lost Lodermulch. Now we muster fifty-seven, comrades all, tried and true, and it is a sad thing to dissolve our association, which we all will remember forever!

"Two days hence the Lustral Rites begin. We are in good time. Those who have not disbursed all

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

their funds gaming—" here Garstang turned a sharp glance toward Cugel "—may seek comfortable inns at which to house themselves. The impoverished must fare as best they can. Now our journey is at its end; we herewith disband and go our own ways, though all will necessarily meet two days hence at the Black Obelisk. Farewell until this time!"

The pilgrims now dispersed, some walking along the banks of the Scamander toward a nearby inn, others turning aside and proceeding into the city proper.

Cugel approached Voynod. "I am strange to this region, as you are aware; perhaps you can recommend an inn of large comfort at small cost."

"Indeed," said Voynod. "I am bound for just such an inn: the Old Dastric Empire Hostelry, which occupies the precincts of a former palace. Unless conditions have changed, sumptuous luxury and exquisite viands are offered at no great cost."

The prospect met with Cugel's approval; the two set out through the avenues of old Erze Damath, past clusters of stucco huts, then across a region where no buildings stood and the avenues created a vacant checkerboard, then into a district of great mansions still currently in use: these set back among intricate gardens. The folk of Erze Damath were handsome enough, if somewhat swarthier than the folk of Almery. The men wore only black: tight trousers and vests with black pompons; the women were splendid in gowns of yellow, red, orange and magenta, and their slippers gleamed with orange and black sequins. Blue and green were rare, being unlucky colors, and purple signified death. The women displayed tall plumes in their hair, while the men wore jaunty black disks, their scalps protruding through a central hole. A resinous balsam seemed very much the fashion, and everyone Cugel met exuded a waft of aloes or myrrh or carcynth. All in all the folk of Erze Damath seemed no less cultivated than those of Kauchique, and more vital than the citizens of Azenomei.

Ahead appeared the Old Dastric Empire Hostelry, not far from the Black Obelisk itself. To the dissatisfaction of both Cugel and Voynod, the premises were completely occupied, and the attendant refused them admittance. "The Lustral Rites have attracted all manner of devout folk," he explained. "You will be fortunate to secure lodging of any kind."

So it proved: from inn to inn went Cugel and Voynod, to be turned away in every case. Finally, on the western outskirts of the city, at the very edge of the Silver Desert, they were received by a large tavern of somewhat disreputable appearance: the Inn of the Green Lamp.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Until ten minutes ago I could not have housed you," stated the landlord, "but the thief-takers apprehended two persons who lodged here, naming them footpads and congenital rogues."

"I trust this is not the general tendency of your clientele?" inquired Voynod.

"Who is to say?" replied the innkeeper. "It is my business to provide food and drink and lodging; no more. Ruffians and deviants must eat, drink and sleep, no less than savants and zealots. All have passed on occasion through my doors, and, after all, what do I know of you?"

Dusk was falling and without further ado Cugel and Voynod housed themselves at the Sign of the Green Lamp. After refreshing themselves they repaired to the common room for their evening meal. This was a hall of considerable extent, with age-blackened beams, a floor of dark brown tile, various posts and columns of scarred wood, each supporting a lamp. The clientele was various, as the landlord had intimated, displaying a dozen costumes and complexions. Desert-men lean as snakes, wearing leather smocks, sat on one hand; on the other were four with white faces and silky red top-knots who uttered never a word. Along a counter to the back sat a group of bravos in brown trousers, black capes and leather berets, each with a spherical jewel dangling by a gold chain from his ear.

Cugel and Voynod consumed a meal of fair quality, though somewhat rudely served, then sat drinking wine and considering how to pass the evening. Voynod decided to rehearse cries of passion and devotional frenzies to be exhibited at the Lustral Rites. Cugel thereupon besought him to lend his talisman of erotic stimulation. "The women of Erze Damath show to good advantage, and with the help of the talisman I will extend my knowledge of their capabilities."

"By no means," said Voynod, hugging his pouch close to his side. "My reasons need no amplification."

Cugel put on a sullen scowl. Voynod was a man whose grandiose personal conceptions seemed tasteful, by reason of his unhealthy, gaunt and saturnine appearance.

Voynod drained his mug, with a meticulous frugality Cugel found additionally irritating, and rose to his feet. "I will now retire to my chamber."

As he turned away a bravo swaggering across the room jostled him. Voynod snapped an acrimonious instruction, which the bravo did not choose to ignore. "How dare you use such words to me! Draw and defend yourself, or I cut your nose from your face!" And the bravo snatched forth his blade.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"As you will," said Voynod. "One moment until I find my sword." With a wink at Cugel he anointed his blade with the salve, then turned to the bravo. "Prepare for death, my good fellow!" He leapt grandly forward. The bravo, noting Voynod's preparations, and understanding that he faced magic, stood numb with terror. With a flourish Voynod ran him through, and wiped his blade on the bravo's hat.

The dead man's companions at the counter started to their feet, but halted as Voynod with great aplomb turned to face them. "Take care, you dunghill cocks! Notice the fate of your fellow! He died by the power of my magic blade, which is of inexorable metal and cuts rock and steel like butter. Behold!" And Voynod struck out at a pillar. The blade, striking an iron bracket, broke into a dozen pieces. Voynod stood non-plussed, but the bravo's companions surged forward.

"What then of your magic blade? Our blades are ordinary steel but bite deep!" And in a moment Voynod was cut to bits.

The bravos now turned upon Cugel. "What of you? Do you wish to share the fate of your comrade?"

"By no means!" stated Cugel. "This man was but my servant, carrying my pouch. I am a magician; observe this tube! I will project blue concentrate at the first man to threaten me!"

The bravos shrugged, turned away. Cugel secured Voynod's pouch, then gestured to the landlord. "Be so good as to remove these corpses; then bring a further mug of spiced wine."

"What of your comrade's account?" demanded the landlord testily.

"I will settle it in full, have no fear."

The corpses were carried to the rear compound; Cugel consumed a last mug of wine, then retired to his chamber, where he spread the contents of Voynod's pouch upon the table. The money went into his purse; the talismans, amulets and instruments he packed into his own pouch; the salve he tossed aside. Content with the day's work, he reclined upon the couch, and was soon asleep.

On the following day Cugel roamed the city, climbing the tallest of the eight hills. The vista which spread before him was both bleak and magnificent. To right and left rolled the great Scamander. The avenues of the city marked off square blocks of ruins, empty wastes, the stucco huts of the poor and the palaces of the rich. Erze Damath was the largest city of Cugel's experience, far vaster than any of Almery or Ascolais, though now the greater part lay tumbled in mouldering ruin.

Returning to the central section, Cugel sought out the booth of a professional geographer, and

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

after paying a fee, inquired the most secure and expeditious route to Almery.

The sage gave no hasty nor ill-considered answer, but brought forth several charts and directories. After profound deliberation he turned to Cugel. "This is my counsel. Follow the Scamander north to the Asc, proceed along the Asc until you encounter a bridge of six piers. Here turn your face to the north, proceed across the Mountains of Magnatz, whereupon you will find before you that forest known as the Great Erm. Fare westward through this forest and approach the shore of the Northern Sea. Here you must build a coracle and entrust yourself to the force of wind and current. If by chance you should reach the Land of the Falling Wall, then it is a comparatively easy journey south to Almery."

Cugel made an impatient gesture. "In essence this is the way I came. Is there no other route?"

"Indeed there is. A rash man might choose to risk the Silver Desert, whereupon he would find the Songan Sea, across which lie the impassable wastes of a region contiguous to East Almery."

"Well then, this seems not infeasible. How may I cross the Silver Desert? Are there caravans?"

"To what purpose? There are none to buy the goods thus conveyed; only bandits who prefer to pre-empt the merchandise. A minimum force of forty men is necessary to intimidate the bandits."

Cugel departed the booth. At a nearby tavern he drank a flask of wine and considered how best to raise a force of forty men. The pilgrims, of course, numbered fifty-six; no, fifty-five, what with the death of Voynod; still such a band would serve very well . . .

Cugel drank more wine and considered further.

At last he paid his score and turned his steps to the Black Obelisk. "Obelisk" perhaps was a misnomer, the object being a great fang of solid black stone rearing a hundred feet above the city. At the base five statues had been carved, each facing a different direction, each the Prime Adept of some particular creed. Gilfig faced to the south, his four hands presenting symbols, his feet resting upon the necks of ecstatic supplicants, with toes elongated and curled upward, to indicate elegance and delicacy.

Cugel sought information of a nearby attendant. "Who, in regard to the Black Obelisk, is Chief Hierarch, and where may he be found?"

"Precursor Hulm is that individual," said the attendant and indicated a splendid structure nearby. "Within that gem-encrusted structure his sanctum may be found."

Cugel proceeded to the building indicated and after many vehement declarations was ushered

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

into the presence of Precursor Hulm: a man of middle years, somewhat stocky and round of face. Cugel gestured to the underhierophant who so reluctantly had brought him hither. "Go; my message is for the Precursor alone."

The Precursor gave a signal; the hierophant departed. Cugel hitched himself forward. "I may talk without fear of being overheard?"

"Such is the case."

"First of all," said Cugel, "know that I am a powerful wizard. Behold! a tube which projects blue concentrate! And here, a screed listing eighteen phases of the Laganetic Cycle! And this instrument: a horn which allows the dead to speak, and used in another fashion, allows information to be conveyed into the dead brain! I possess other marvels galore!"

"Interesting indeed," murmured the Precursor.

"My second disclosure is this: at one time I served as incense-blender at the Temple of Teleologues in a far land, where I learned that each of the sacred images was constructed so that the priests, in case of urgency, might perform acts purporting to be those of the divinity itself."

"Why should this not be the case?" inquired the Precursor benignly. "The divinity, controlling every aspect of existence, persuades the priests to perform such acts."

Cugel assented to the proposition. "I therefore assume that the images carved into the Black Obelisk are somewhat similar?"

The Precursor smiled. "To which of the five do you specifically refer?"

"Specifically to the representation of Gilfig."

The Precursor's eyes went vague; he seemed to reflect.

Cugel indicated the various talismans and instruments. "In return for a service I will donate certain of these contrivances to the care of this office."

"What is the service?"

Cugel explained in detail, and the Precursor nodded thoughtfully. "Once more, if you will demonstrate your magic goods."

Cugel did so.

"These are all of your devices?"

Cugel reluctantly displayed the erotic stimulator and explained the function of the ancillary talisman. The Precursor nodded his head, briskly this time. "I believe that we can reach agreement; all is as omnipotent Gilfig desires."

"We are agreed then?"

"We are agreed!'

The following morning the group of fifty-five pilgrims assembled at the Black Obelisk. They prostrated themselves before the image of Gilfig, and prepared to proceed with their devotions. Suddenly the eyes of the image flashed fire and the mouth opened. "Pilgrims!" came a brazen voice.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Go forth to do my bidding! Across the Silver Desert you must travel, to the shore of the Songan Sea! Here you will find a fane, before which you must abase yourselves. Go! Across the Silver Desert, with all despatch!"

The voice quieted. Garstang spoke in a trembling voice. "We hear, O Gilfig! We obey!"

At this moment Cugel leapt forward. "I also have heard this marvel! I too will make the journey! Come, let us set forth!"

"Not so fast," said Garstang. "We cannot run skipping and bounding like dervishes. Supplies will be needed, as well as beasts of burden. To this end funds are required. Who then will subscribe?"

"I offer two hundred terces!" "And I, sixty terces, the sum of my wealth!" "I, who lost ninety terces gaming with Cugel, possess only forty terces, which I hereby contribute." So it went and even Cugel turned sixty-five terces into the common fund.

"Good," said Garstang. "Tomorrow then I will make arrangements, and the following day, if all goes well, we depart Erze Damath by the Old West Gate!"

4: THE SILVER DESERT AND THE SONGAN SEA

In the morning Garstang, with the assistance of Cugel and Casmyre, went forth to procure the necessary equipage. They were directed to an outfitting yard, situated on one of the now-vacant areas bounded by the boulevards of the old city. A wall of mud brick mingled with fragments of carved stone surrounded a compound, whence issued sounds: crying, calls, deep bellows, throaty growls, barks, screams and roars, and a strong multiphase odor, combined of ammonia, ensilage, a dozen sorts of dung, the taint of old meat, general acridity.

Passing through a portal the travelers entered an office overlooking the central yard, where pens, cages and stockades held beasts of so great variety as to astound Cugel.

The yard-keeper came forward: a tall, yellow-skinned man, much scarred, lacking his nose and one ear. He wore a gown of gray leather belted at the waist and a tall conical black hat with flaring earflaps.

Garstang stated the purpose of the visit. "We are pilgrims who must journey across the Silver Desert, and wish to hire packbeasts. We number fifty or more, and anticipate a journey of twenty days in each direction with perhaps five days spent at our devotions: let this information be a guide in your thinking. Naturally we expect only the staunchest, most industrious and amenable beasts at your disposal."

"All this is very well," stated the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

keeper, "but my price for hire is identical to my price for sale, so you might as well have the full benefit of your money, in the form of title to the beasts concerned in the transaction."

"And the price?" inquired Casmyre.

"This depends upon your choice; each beast commands a different value."

Garstang, who had been surveying the compound, shook his head ruefully. "I confess to puzzlement. Each beast is of a different sort, and none seem to fit any well-defined categories."

The keeper admitted that such was the case. "If you care to listen, I can explain all. The tale is of a continuing fascination, and will assist you in the management of your beasts."

"We will doubly profit to hear you then," said Garstang gracefully, though Cugel was making motions of impatience.

The keeper went to a shelf, took forth a leather-bound folio. "In a past aeon Mad King Kutt ordained a menagerie like none before, for his private amazement and the stupefaction of the world. His wizard, Follinense, therefore produced a group of beasts and teratoids unique, combining the wildest variety of plasms; to the result that you see."

"The menagerie has persisted so long?" asked Garstang in wonder.

"Indeed not. Nothing of Mad King Kutt is extant save the legend, and a casebook of the wizard Follinense—" here he tapped the leather folio "—which describes his bizarre systemology. For instance—" he opened the folio. "Well . . . hmmm. Here is a statement, somewhat less explicit than others, in which he analyzes the half-men, little more than a brief set of notes:

'Gid: hybrid of man, gargoyle, whorl, leaping insect.

Deodand: wolverine, basilisk, man.

Erb: bear, man, lank-lizard, demon.

Grue: man, ocular bat, the unusual hoon.

Leucomorph: unknown.

Bazil: felinodore, man, (wasp?)'."

Casmyre clapped his hands in astonishment. "Did Follinense then create these creatures, to the subsequent disadvantage of humanity?"

"Surely not," said Garstang. "It seems more an exercise in idle musing. Twice he admits to wonder."

"Such is my opinion, in this present case," stated the keeper, "though elsewhere he is less dubious."

"How are the creatures before us then connected with the menagerie?" inquired Casmyre.

The keeper shrugged. "Another of the Mad King's jocularities. He

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

loosed the entire assemblage upon the countryside, to the general disturbance. The creatures, endowed with an eclectic fecundity, became more rather than less bizarre, and now they roam the Plain of Oparona and Blanwalt Forest in great numbers."

"So then, what of us?" demanded Cugel. "We wish pack-animals, docile and frugal of habit, rather than freaks and curiosities, no matter how edifying."

"Certain of my ample stock are capable of this function," said the keeper with dignity. "These command the highest prices. On the other hand for a single terce you may own a long-necked, big-bellied creature of astounding voracity."

"The price is attractive," said Garstang with regret. "Unfortunately we need beasts to carry food and water across the Silver Desert."

"In this case we must be more pointed." The keeper fell to studying his charges. "The tall beast on two legs is perhaps less ferocious than he appears . . ."

Eventually a selection of beasts numbering fifteen was made, and a price agreed upon. The keeper brought them to the gate; Garstang, Cugel and Casmyre took possession and led the fifteen ill-matched creatures at a sedate pace through the streets of Erze Damath, to the West Gate. Here Cugel was left in charge, while Garstang and Casmyre went to purchase stores and other necessaries.

By nightfall all preparations were made, and on the following morning when the first maroon ray of sunlight struck the Black Obelisk, the pilgrims set forth. The beasts carried panniers of food and bladders of water; the pilgrims all wore new shoes and broad-brimmed hats. Garstang had been unable to hire a guide, but had secured a chart from the geographer, though it indicated no more than a small circle labeled "Erze Damath" and a larger area marked "Songan Sea".

Cugel was given one of the beasts to lead, a twelve-legged creature twenty feet in length, with a small foolishly grinning child's head and tawny fur covering all. Cugel found the task irking, for the beast blew a reeking breath upon his neck, and several times pressed so close as to tread on his heels.

Of the fifty-seven pilgrims who had disembarked from the raft, forty-nine departed for the fane on the shores of the Songan Sea, and the number was almost at once reduced to forty-eight. A certain Tokharin, stepping off the trail to answer a call of nature, was stung by a monster scorpion, and ran northward in great leaps, screaming hoarsely, until presently he disappeared from view.

The day passed with no further incident. The land was a dry gray waste, scattered with flints, sup-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

porting only ironweed. To the south was a range of low hills, and Cugel thought to perceive one or two shapes standing motionless along the crest. At sunset the caravan halted; and Cugel, recalling the bandits who reputedly inhabited the area, persuaded Garstang to post two sentries: Lippelt and Mirch-Masen. In the morning they were gone, leaving no trace, and the pilgrims were alarmed and oppressed. They stood in a nervous cluster looking in all directions. The desert lay flat and dim in the dark low light of dawn. To the south were a few hills, only their smooth top surfaces illuminated; elsewhere the land lay flat to the horizon.

Presently the caravan started off, and now there were but forty-six. Cugel, as before, was put in charge of the long many-legged beast, who now engaged in the practice of butting its grinning face into Cugel's shoulder blades.

The day passed without incident; miles ahead became miles behind. First marched Garstang, with a staff, then came Vitz and Casmyre, followed by several others. Then came the pack-beasts, each with its particular silhouette: one low and sinuous; another tall and bifurcate, almost of human conformation, except for its head, which was small and squat like the shell of a horseshoe crab. Another, convex of back, seemed to bounce or prance on its six stiff legs; another was like a horse sheathed in white feathers. Behind the pack-beasts straggled the remaining pilgrims, with Bluner characteristically walking to the rear, in accordance with the exaggerated humility to which he was prone. At the camp that evening Cugel brought forth the expansible fence, once the property of Voynod, and enclosed the group in a stout stockade.

The following day the pilgrims crossed a range of low mountains, and here they suffered an attack by bandits, but it seemed no more than an exploratory skirmish, and the sole casualty was Haxt who suffered a wound in the heel. But a more serious affair occurred two hours later. As they passed below a slope, a boulder became dislodged, to roll through the caravan, killing a pack-beast, as well as Andle the Funambulous Evangel and Roremaund the Skeptic. During the night Haxt died also, evidently poisoned by the weapon which had wounded him.

With grave faces the pilgrims set forth, and almost at once were attacked from ambush by the bandits. Luckily the pilgrims were alert, and the bandits were routed with a dozen dead, while the pilgrims lost only Cray and Magasthen.

Now there was grumbling and long looks turned eastward toward Erze Damath. Garstang rallied the flagging spirits: "We are Gilfig-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ites; Gilfig spoke! On the shores of the Songan Sea we will seek the sacred fane! Gilfig is all-wise and all-merciful; those who fall in his service are instantly transported to paradaisacal Gamamere! Pilgrims! To the West!"

Taking heart the caravan once more set forth, and the day passed without further incident. During the night however three of the pack-beasts slipped their tethers and decamped, and Garstang was forced to announce short rations for all.

During the seventh day's march, Thilfox ate a handful of poison berries and died in spasms, whereupon his brother Vitz, the locutor, went raving mad and ran up the line of pack-beasts, blaspheming Gilfig and slashing water bladders with his knife, until Cugel finally killed him.

Two days later the haggard band came upon a spring. In spite of Garstang's warning Salanave and Arlo flung themselves down and drank in great gulps. Almost at once they clutched their bellies, gagged and choked, their lips the color of sand, and presently they were dead.

A week later fifteen men and four beasts came over a rise to look out across the placid waters of the Songan Sea. Cugel had survived, as well as Garstang, Casmyre and Subucule. Before them lay a marsh, fed by a small stream. Cugal tested the water with that amulet bestowed upon him by Iucounu, and pronounced it safe. All drank to repletion, ate reeds converted to a nutritious if insipid substance by the same amulet, then slept.

Cugel, aroused by a sense of peril, jumped up, to note a sinister stir among the reeds. He roused his fellows, and all readied their weapons; but whatever had caused the motion took alarm and retired. The time was middle afternoon; the pilgrims walked down to the bleak shore to take stock of the situation. They looked north and south but found no trace of the fane. Tempers flared; there was a quarrel which Garstang was able to quell only by dint of the utmost persuasiveness. Balch, who had wandered up the beach, returned in great excitement: "A village!"

All set forth in hope and eagerness, but the village, when the pilgrims approached, proved a poor thing indeed, a huddle of reed huts inhabited by lizard people who bared their teeth and lashed sinewy blue tails in defiance. The pilgrims moved off down the beach, and sat on hummocks watching the low surf of the Songan Sea.

Garstang, frail and bent with the privations he had suffered, was the first to speak. He attempted to infuse his voice with cheer. "We have arrived, we have triumphed over the terrible Silver Desert! Now we need only locate the fane, perform our devotions; we may

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

then return to Erze Damath and a future of assured bliss!"

"All very well," grumbled Balch, "but where may the fane be found? To right and left is the same bleak beach!"

"We must put our trust in the guidance of Gilfig!" declared Subucule. He scratched an arrow upon a bit of wood, touched it with his holy ribbon. He called: "Gilfig, O Gilfig! Guide us to the fane! I hereby toss high a marked pointer!" And he flung the chip high into the air. When it alighted, the arrow pointed south. "South we must fare!" cried Garstang. "South to the fane!"

But Balch and certain others refused to respond. "Do you not see that we are fatigued to the point of death? In my opinion Gilfig should have guided our steps to the fane, instead of abandoning us to uncertainty!"

"Gilfig has guided us indeed!" responded Subucule. "Did you not notice the direction of the arrow?"

Balch gave a croak of sardonic laughter. "Any stick thrown high must come down, and it will point south as easily as north."

Subucule drew back in horror. "You blaspheme Gilfig!"

"Not at all; I am not sure that Gilfig heard your instruction, or perhaps you gave him insufficient time to react. Toss up the stick one hundred times; if it points south on each occasion, I will march south in haste."

"Very well," said Subucle. He once again called upon Gilfig and threw up the chip, but when it struck the ground the arrow pointed north.

Balch said nothing. Subucule grew red in the face. "Gilfig has no time for games. He directed us once, and deemed it sufficient."

"I am unconvinced," said Balch.

"And I." "And I."

Garstang held up his arms imploringly. "We have come far; we have toiled together, rejoiced together; fought and suffered together: let us not now fall in dissidence!"

Balch and the others only shrugged. "We will not plunge blindly south."

"What will you do then? Go north? Or return to Erze Damath?"

"Erze Damath? Without food and only four pack-beasts. Bah!"

"Then let us fare south in search of the fane."

Balch gave another mulish shrug, at which Subucule became angry. "So be it! Those who fare south to this side, those who cast in with Balch to that!"

Garstang, Cugel and Casmyre joined Subucule; the others stayed with Balch, a group numbering eleven, and now they fell to whispering among themselves, while the four faithful pilgrims watched in apprehension.

The eleven jumped to their feet. "Farewell."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Where do you go? asked Garstang.

"No matter. Seek your fane if you must; we go about our own affairs." With the briefest of farewells they marched to the village of the lizard folk, where they slaughtered the males, filed the teeth of the females, dressed them in garments of reeds, and installed themselves as lords of the village.

Garstang, Subucule, Casmyre and Cugel meanwhile traveled south along the shore. At nightfall they pitched camp and dined upon molluscs and crabs. In the morning they found that the four remaining pack-beasts had departed, and now they were alone.

"It is the will of Gilfig," said Subucule. "We need only find the fane and die!"

"Courage!" muttered Garstang. "Let us not give way to despair!"

"What else is left? Will we ever see Pholgus Valley again?"

"Who knows? Let us first perform our devotions at the fane."

With that they proceeded, and marched the remainder of the day. By nightfall they were too tired to do more than slump to the sand of the beach.

The sea spread before them, flat as a table, so calm that the setting sun cast only its exact image rather than a trail. Clams and crabs once more provided a meager supper, after which they composed themselves to sleep on the beach. Somewhat after the first hours of night Cugel was awakened by a sound of music. Starting up, he looked across the water to find that a ghostly city had come into existence. Slender towers reared into the sky, lit by glittering motes of white light which drifted slowly up and down, back and forth. On the promenades sauntered the gayest of crowds, wearing pale luminous garments and blowing horns of delicate sound. A barge piled with silken cushions, moved by an enormous sail of cornflower silk, drifted past. Lamps at the bow and stern-post illuminated a deck thronged with merrymakers: some singing and playing lutes, others drinking from goblets. Cugel ached to share their joy. He struggled to his knees, and called out. The merrymakers put down their instruments and stared at him, but now the barge had drifted past, tugged by the great blue sail. Presently the city flickered and vanished, leaving only the dark night sky.

Cugel stared into the night, his throat aching with a sorrow he had never known before. To his surprise he found himself standing at the edge of the water. Nearby were Subucule, Garstang and Casmyre. All gazed at each other through the dark, but exchanged no words. All returned up the beach where presently they fell asleep in the sand.

Throughout the next day there was little conversation, and even

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

a mutual avoidance, as if each of the four wished to be alone with his thoughts. From time to time one or the other looked halfheartedly toward the south, but no one seemed in a mood to leave the spot, and no one spoke of departure.

The day passed while the pilgrims rested in a half-torpor. Sunset came and night; but none of the group sought to sleep.

During the middle evening the ghost city reappeared, and tonight a fete was in progress. Fireworks of a wonderful intricacy bloomed in the sky: laces, nets, starbursts of red and green and blue and silver. Along the promenade came a parade, with ghost-maidens dressed in iridescent garments, ghost-musicians in voluminous garments of red and orange and capering ghost-harlequins. For hours the sound of revelry drifted across the water, and Cugel went out to stand knee-deep, and here he watched until the fete quieted and the city dimmed. As he turned away, the others followed him back up the shore.

On the following day all were weak from hunger and thirst. In a croaking voice Cugel muttered that they must proceed. Garstang nodded and said huskily: "To the fane, the fane of Gilfig!"

Subucule nodded. The cheeks of his once plump face were haggard; his eyes were filmed and clouded. "Yes," he wheezed. "We have rested; on we must go!"

Casmyre nodded dully. "To the fane!"

But none set forth to the south. Cugel wandered up the fore-shore and seated himself to wait for nightfall. Looking to his right he saw a human skeleton resting in a posture not dissimilar to his own. Shuddering Cugel turned to the left and here was a second skeleton, this one broken by time and the seasons, and beyond yet another, this a mere heap of bones.

Cugel rose to his feet and ran tottering to the others. "Quick!" he called. "While strength yet remains to us! To the south! Come, before we die, like those others whose bones rest above!"

"Yes, yes," mumbled Garstang. "To the fane." And he heaved himself to his feet. "Come!" he called to the others. "We fare south!"

Subucule raised himself erect, but Casmyre, after a listless attempt, fell back. "Here I stay," he said. "When you reach the fane, intercede for me with Gilfig; explain that the entrancement overcame the strength of my body."

Garstang wished to remain and plead, but Cugel pointed to the setting sun. "If we wait till darkness, we are lost! Tomorrow our strength will be gone!"

Subucule took Garstang's arm. "We must be away, before nightfall."

Garstang made a final plea to Casmyre. "My friend and fellow, gather your strength. Together we

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

have come, from far Pholgus Valley, by raft down the Scamander, and across the dreadful desert! Must we part before attaining the fane?"

"Come, to the fane!" croaked Cugel.

But Casmyre turned his face away. Cugel and Subucule led Garstang away, with tears coursing down his withered cheeks; and they staggered south along the beach, averting their eyes from the clear smooth face of the sea.

The old sun set and cast up a fan of color. A high scatter of cloud-flakes glowed halcyon yellow on a strange bronze-brown sky. The city now appeared, and never had it seemed more magnificent, with spires catching the light of sunset. Along the promenade walked youths and maidens with flowers in their hair, and sometimes they paused to stare at the three who walked along the beach. Sunset faded; white lights shone from the city, and music wafted across the water. For a long time it followed the three pilgrims, at last fading into the distance and dying. The sea lay blank to the west, reflecting a few last umber and orange glimmers.

About this time the pilgrims found a stream of fresh water, with berries and wild plums growing nearby, and here they rested the night. In the morning Cugel trapped a fish and caught crabs along the beach. Strengthened, the three continued south, always seeking ahead for the fane, which now Cugel had almost come to expect, so intense was the feeling of Garstang and Subucule. Indeed, as the days passed, it was the devout Subucule who began to despair, to question the sincerity of Gilfig's command, to doubt the essential virtue of Gilfig himself. "What is gained by this agonizing pilgrimage? Does Gilfig doubt our devotion? Surely we proved ourselves by attendance at the Lustral Rite; why has he sent us so far?"

"The ways of Gilfig are inscrutable," said Garstang. "We have come so far; we must seek on and on and on!"

Subucule stopped short, to look back the way they had come. "Here is my proposal. At this spot let us erect an altar of stones, which becomes our fane; let us then perform a rite. With Gilfig's requirement satisfied, we may turn our faces to the north, to the village where our fellows reside. Here, happily we may recapture the pack-beasts, replenish our stores, and set forth across the desert, perhaps to arrive once more at Erze Damath."

Garstang hesitated. "There is much to recommend your proposal. And yet—"

"A boat!" cried Cugel. He pointed to the sea where a half-mile offshore floated a fishing boat propelled by a square sail hanging

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

from a long limber yard. It passed behind a headland which rose a mile south of where the pilgrims stood, and now Cugel indicated a village along the shore.

"Excellent!" declared Garstang. "These folk may be fellow Gilfigites, and this village the site of the fane! Let us proceed!"

Subucule still was reluctant. "Could knowledge of the sacred texts have penetrated so far?"

"Caution is the watchword," said Cugel. "We must reconnoiter with great care." And he led the way through a forest of tamarisk and larch, to where they could look down into the village. The huts were rudely constructed of black stone and housed a folk of ferocious aspect. Black hair in spikes surrounded the round clay-colored faces; coarse black bristles grew off the burly shoulders like epaulettes. Fangs protruded from the mouths of male and female alike and all spoke in harsh growling shouts. Cugel, Garstang and Subucule drew back with the utmost caution, and hidden among the trees, conferred in low voices. Garstang at last was discouraged and found nothing more to hope for. "I am exhausted, spiritually as well as physically; perhaps here is where I die."

Subucule looked to the north. "I return to take my chances on the Silver Desert. If all goes well, I will arrive once more at Erze Damath, or even Pholgus Valley."

Garstang turned to Cugel. "And what of you, since the fane of Gilfig is nowhere to be found?"

Cugel pointed to a dock at which a number of boats were moored. "My destination is Almery, across the Songan Sea. I propose to commandeer a boat and sail to the west."

"I then bid you farewell," said Subucule. "Garstang, will you come?"

Garstang shook his head. "It is too far. I would surely die on the desert. I will cross the sea with Cugel and take the Word of Gilfig to the folk of Almery."

"Farewell then, to you as well," and Subucule turned swiftly to hide the emotion on his face and started north. Cugel and Garstang watched the sturdy form recede into the distance and disappear. Then they turned to a consideration of the dock. Garstang was dubious. "The boats seem seaworthy enough, but to 'commandeer' is to 'steal': an act specifically discountenanced by Gilfig."

"No difficulty exists," said Cugel. "I will place gold coins upon the dock, to a fair valuation of the boat."

Garstang gave a dubious assent. "What then of food and water?"

"After securing the boat, we will proceed along the coast until we are able to secure supplies, after which we sail due west."

To this Garstang assented and the two fell to examining the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

boats, comparing one against the other. The final selection was a staunch craft some ten or twelve paces long, of ample beam, with a small cabin.

At dusk they stole down to the dock. All was quiet: the fishermen had returned to the village. Garstang boarded the craft and reported all in good order. Cugel began casting off the lines, when from the end of the dock came a savage outcry and a dozen of the burly villagers came lumbering forth.

"We are lost," cried Cugel. "Run for your life, or better, swim!"

"Impossible," declared Garstang. "If this is death, I will meet it with what dignity I am able!" And he climbed up on the dock. In short order they were surrounded by folk of all ages, attracted by the commotion. One, an elder of the village, inquired in a stern voice: "What do you here, skulking on our dock, and preparing to steal a boat?"

"Our motive is simplicity itself," said Cugel. "We wish to cross the sea."

"What?" roared the elder. "How is that possible? The boat carries neither food nor water, and is poorly equipped. Why did you not approach us and make your needs known?"

Cugel blinked and exchanged a glance with Garstang. He shrugged. "I will be candid. Your appearance caused us such alarm that we did not dare."

The remark evoked mingled amusement and surprise in the crowd. The spokesman said: "All of us are puzzled; explain if you will."

"Very well," said Cugel. "May I be absolutely frank?"

"By all means!"

"Certain aspects of your appearance impress us as feral and barbarous: your protruding fangs, the black mane which surrounds your faces, the cacophony of your speech—to name only a few items."

The villagers laughed incredulously. "What nonsense!" they cried. "Our teeth are long that we may tear the coarse fish on which we subsist. We wear our hair thus to repel a certain noxious insect, and since we are all rather deaf, we possibly tend to shout. Essentially we are a gentle and kindly folk."

"Exactly," said the elder, "and in order to demonstrate this, tomorrow we shall provision our best boat and send you forth with hopes and good wishes. Tonight there shall be a feast in your honor!"

"Here is a village of true saintliness," declared Garstang. "Are you by chance worshippers of Gilfig?"

"No; we prostrate ourselves before the fish-god Yob, who seems as efficacious as any. But come,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

let us ascend to the village. We must make preparations for the feast."

They climbed steps hewn in the rock of the cliff, which gave upon an area illuminated by a dozen flaring torches. The elder indicated a hut more commodious than the others: "This is where you shall rest the night; I will sleep elsewhere."

Garstang again was moved to comment upon the benevolence of the fisher-folk, at which the elder bowed his head. "We try to achieve a spiritual unity. Indeed we symbolize this ideal in the main dish of our ceremonial feasts." He clapped his hands. "Let us prepare!"

A great cauldron was hung over a tripod; a block and a cleaver were arranged, and now each of the villagers, marching past the block, chopped off a finger and cast it into the pot.

The elder explained: "By this simple rite, which naturally you are expected to join, we demonstrate our common heritage and our mutual dependence. Come, let us step into the line." And Cugel and Garstang had no choice but to excise fingers and cast them into the pot with the others.

The feast continued long into the night. In the morning the villagers were as good as their word. An especially seaworthy boat was provided and loaded with stores, including food left over from the previous night's feast.

The villagers gathered on the dock. Cugel and Garstang voiced their gratitude, then Cugel hoisted the sail and Garstang threw off the mooring lines. A wind filled the sail, the boat moved out on the face of the Songan Sea. Gradually the shore became one with the murk of distance, and the two were alone, with only the black metallic shimmer of the water to all sides.

Noon came, and the boat moved in an elemental emptiness: water below, air above; silence in all directions. The afternoon was long and torpid, unreal as a dream; and the melancholy grandeur of sunset was followed by a dusk the color of watered wine.

The wind seemed to freshen and all night they steered west. At dawn the wind died and with sails flapping idly both Cugel and Garstang slept.

Eight times the cycle was repeated. On the morning of the ninth day a low coast-line was sighted ahead. During the middle afternoon they drove the prow of their boat through gentle surf up on a wide white beach. "This then is Almery?" asked Garstang.

"So I believe," said Cugel, "but which quarter I am uncertain. Azenomei may lie to north, west or south. If the forest yonder is that which shrouds East Almery, we would do well to pass to the side, as it bears an evil reputation."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Garstang pointed down the shore. "Notice: another village. If the folk here are like those across the sea, they will help us on our way. Come, let us make our wants known."

Cugel hung back. "It might be wise to reconnoiter, as before."

"To what end?" asked Garstang. "On that occasion we were only misled and confused." He led the way down the beach toward the village. As they approached they could see folk moving across the central plaza: a graceful golden-haired people, who spoke to each other in voices like music. Garstang advanced joyfully, expecting a welcome even more expansive than that they had received on the other shore; but the villagers ran forward and caught them under nets. "Why do you do this?" called Garstang. "We are strangers and intend no harm!"

"You are strangers; just so," spoke the tallest of the golden-haired villagers. "We worship that inexorable god known as Dangott. Strangers are automatically heretics, and so are fed to the sacred apes." With that they began to drag Cugel and Garstang over the sharp stones of the fore-shore while the beautiful children of the village danced joyously to either side.

Cugel managed to bring forth the tube he had secured from Voynod and expelled blue concentrate at the villagers. Aghast, they toppled to the ground and Cugel was able to extricate himself from the net. Drawing his sword he leapt forward to cut Garstang free, but now the villagers rallied. Cugel once more employed his tube, and the villagers fled in dismal agony.

"Go, Cugel," spoke Garstang. "I am an old man, of little vitality. Take to your heels; seek safety, with all my good wishes."

"This normally would be my impulse," Cugel conceded. "But these people have stimulated me to quixotic folly; so clamber from the net; we retreat together." Once more he wrought dismay with the blue projection, while Garstang freed himself, and the two fled along the beach.

The villagers pursued with harpoons. Their first cast pierced Garstang through the back. He fell without a sound. Cugel swung about, aimed the tube, but the spell was exhausted, and only a limpid exudation appeared. The villagers drew back their arms to hurl a second volley; Cugel shouted a curse, dodged and ducked, and the harpoons plunged past him into the sand of the beach. Cugel shook his fist a final time, then took to his heels and fled into the forest.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

THE MAGAZINE OF Fantasy and Science Fiction

MARKET PLACE

BOOKS-MAGAZINES

The fanzine about Sword-&-sorcery stories, 8 issues, $2; Arma, Box 9120, Chicago, 60690.

"ESP TESTING—DO-IT-YOURSELF". Fascinating! Anyone can do! $2.00. MAGNETIC, Box 3677-FFY, Washington, D.C. 20007.

SF Bargains. List free. Werewolf Bookshop, Verona 4G, Pa.

Why buy books? Send 10¢ for information and catalog to: Science Fiction Circulating Library, P. O. Box 1308, So. San Gabriel, Calif.

Locate any book! Caribbean Magic Bookhunters, Box 15070-C, Orlando, Fla.

25,000 magazines for sale. Thousands wanted in excellent condition; science fiction, weird, horror, spicy, western, adventure, others. Send list, enclosing stamp, Magazine Center, Box 214, Little Rock, Ark.

Inventory Clearance. Send $1. for seven mystery pocket books—Mercury Mysteries, Bestseller Mysteries, Jonathan Press Mysteries—in good condition. Maximum order, 21 books for $3. Send order and remittance to: Mercury Press, Box 271, Rockville Centre, N. Y. 11571.

Pocket Books, Comics, Magazines $1.00 per dozen. Snowden's Book Exchange, Box 185, Victoria, B.C., Canada.

Love Lyrics, Songs—$1.00. Free catalogue, Bookways, 444-FS, Fort Lee, New Jersey, 07024.

FREE BOOK "990 Successful, Little-Known Businesses." Work home! Plymouth-935L, Brooklyn, New York 11218.

Better Occult, Witchcraft, Demonology. Catalogs. Summerfare Books, Box 9617, San Diego, California 92109.

Did you know that man is not an animal—the brain is not the mind—you may be stuck in your mind—you can be released from your mind? If you don't know these things, then you best find out! Read *Dianetics: The Modern Science of Mental Health* by L. Ron Hubbard. Send $5.00 to The Distribution Center, Inc. Dept. FSF, Box 242, Silver Spring, Md. 20907. Order your copy and read the book that millions have read throughout the world.

INDEX (MITSFS) to sf magazines 51-65 second edition. Corrected, expanded. Listings by author, title, contents page. 2300 plus issues, 95 plus titles, US, UK, etc. Offset, hardbound. $6.50. ($8.00 after 5/1/66) Write your dealer or Treasurer, W20-443, MIT, Cambridge, Massachusetts 02139.

SF Books, free list, Fantasy books, 1408 Brookville, Lynchburg, Va.

BOOKPLATES

FREE CATALOGUE—Many beautiful designs. Special designing too. Address BOOKPLATES, Yellow Springs 4, Ohio.

EDUCATION

Be ORDAINED as Christian Minister. Box 335, Philadelphia, Pa. 19105.

HYPNOTISM

Free Illustrated, Hypnotism Catalogue. Write Powers, 8721 Sunset, Hollywood, California 90069.

FREE Hypnotism, Self-Hypnosis, Sleep learning Catalog! Drawer G400, Ruidoso, New Mexico 88345.

Hypnosis Manual plus crystal ball. $2. Fletch, 2407 Catherine, Dallas, Texas 75211.

LEARN WHILE ASLEEP. Hypnotize wtih your recorder, phonograph. Astonishing details, sensational catalog free. Sleep-learning Research Association, Box 24-FS, Olympia, Washington.

Do you have something to advertise to sf readers? Books, magazines, typewriters, telescopes, computers, space-drives, or misc. Use the F&SF Market Place at these low, low rates: $3.00 for minimum of ten (10) words, plus 30¢ for each additional word. Send copy and remittance to: Adv. Dept., Fantasy and Science Fiction, 347 East 53 Street, New York, N. Y. 10022

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

PERSONAL

UNUSUAL, ODD CURIOS. 1000 gifts. Catalog 10¢. WORLDWIDE CURIO HOUSE, Dept. FSF, Box 5655, Minneapolis, Minn. 55417.

English speaking Swedish/German girls seek penfriends/husbands. Photoalbum $5.00; prospectus free!—COSMOCLUB "SILVERTHISTLE", Hamburg 72/SF, Germany.

MISCELLANEOUS

FOREIGN EDITIONS of Fantasy and Science Fiction Limited offer—Send $1. for any 3 foreign edition copies of F&SF (usually 50¢ each)—French, German, Italian, Japanese, Spanish, or British Venture SF. Mercury Press, Box 271, Rockville Centre, N.Y. 11571.

"sergyssimo" French Perfume, ½ oz. $2.65. Swiss electric shaver $5.75. Jack Ryan, 2356 Ohio Avenue, Cincinnati, Ohio.

Abundance Through The Understanding of Truth. Eight dynamic pages. $3.00. Evelyn McKeever, 642 Jones Street, San Francisco, California 94102.

SERVICES-AUTHORS

PUBLISH your book! Join our successful authors: publicity advertising promotion, beautiful books. All subjects invited. Send for free appraisal and detailed booklet. Carlton Press, (Dept. FSD) 84 Fifth Avenue, New York 10011.

WANTED

One copy each of the U.S. edition of Venture Science Fiction, Jan. 57, Sept. 57, and Jan. 58. Write Mercury Press, Box 271, Rockville Centre, N. Y. 11571

YOUR MARKET PLACE

A market is people—alert, intelligent, active people.

Here you can reach 180,000 people (averaging three readers per copy —60,000 paid circulation). Many of them are enthusiastic hobbyists—collecting books, magazines, stamps, coins, model rockets, etc.—actively interested in photography, music, astronomy, painting, sculpture, electronics.

If you have a product or service of merit, tell them about it. The price is right: $3.00 for a minimum of ten (10) words, plus 30¢ for each additional word. To keep the rate this low, we must request remittance with the order.

Advertising Dept., Fantasy & Science Fiction
347 East 53 St., New York, N. Y. 10022

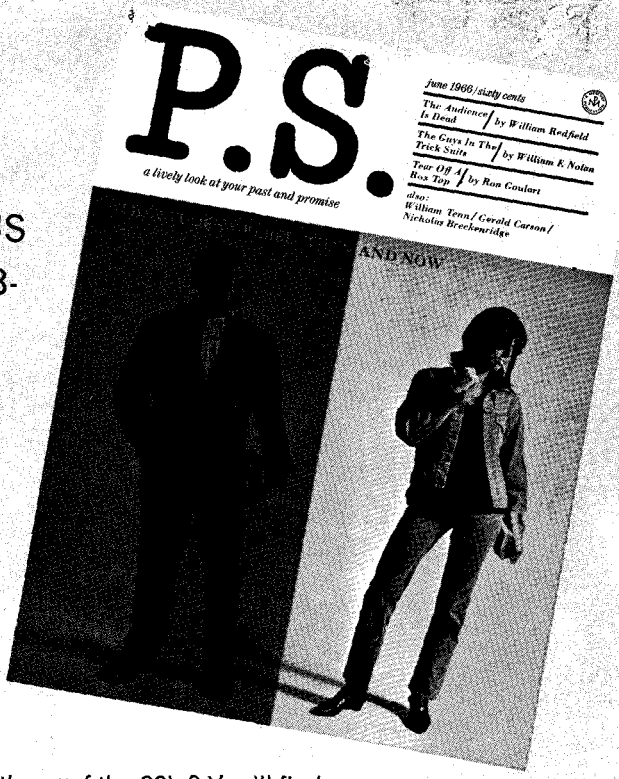
LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

INDEX TO VOLUME THIRTY—JANUARY-JUNE 1966

ASIMOV, ISAAC: Science: The Proton Reckoner ..... Jan. 80
Up and Down the Earth .... Feb. 91
The Rocks of Damocles ..... Mar. 94
The Nobelman of Science ... Apr. 101
Time and Tide ..... May 106
The Isles of Earth ..... June 84
BENFORD, GREG: Representative From Earth ..... Jan. 91
Flattop ..... May 71
BIGGLE, JR., LLOYD: And Madly Teach (novelet) ..... May 4
BRETNOR, R.: The Gadge System Feb. 5
BUCK, DORIS PITKIN: Girls Will Be Girls ..... Feb. 124
Mickey Finn (verse) ..... Mar. 128
The Octopus (verse) ..... Apr. 63
The Little Blue Weeds of Spring ..... June 41
BULMER, KENNETH: The Adjusted ..... June 55
CLINTON, ED M.: The Third Dragon ..... May 100
DECLES, JON: Forgive Us Our Debtors ..... June 76
DEFORD, MIRIAM ALLEN: Against Authority (novelet) ..... Feb. 20
The Colony ..... May 48
DICK, PHILIP K.: We Can Remember It For Your Wholesale (novelet) ..... Apr. 4
EMSHWILLER, CAROL: But Soft, What Light ..... Apr. 41
FAST, JULIUS: Grow Old Along With Me ..... Mar. 82
FINDLAY, D. K.: The Way Back Feb. 83
GARRET, RANDALL: Witness for the Persecution (novelet) . Feb. 55
GOLD, H. L.: Man of Parts .... May 117
GOULART, RON: To the Rescue .. Jan. 46
Breakaway House ..... May 61
GREEN, JR. ROBERT M.: Apology to Inky (novelet) ..... Jan. 98
GUTTRIDGE, LEN: The Most Wonderful News ..... Jan. 53
A Quest For Uplift ..... June 65
HENDERSON, ZENNA: Angels Unawares (novelet) ..... Mar. 5
JAMES, KATHLEEN: The Blind God's Eye (novelet) ..... Mar. 104
KIPLING, RUDYARD: Tomlinson . Mar. 56
LEIBER, FRITZ: Books ..... May - June
MARPLE, A. M.: Appoggiatura . Apr. 25
MCINTOSH, J. T.: The Sudden Silence ..... Apr. 45
MERRIL, JUDITH: Books ..... Jan. - June
NIVEN, LARRY: Bordered In Black ..... Apr. 112
OLIN, RICHARD: Lil, Rorrity, and A Foamin' Sea of Steam Beer ..... Mar. 63
PULLEY, JAMES: The Space Twins ..... Apr. 75
ROBERTS, KEITH: Survey of The Third Planet ..... Jan. 66
ROTHMAN, BARRY: Care In Captivity Series: Tyrannosaurus Rex ..... June 53
RUSS, JOANNA: The New Men .. Feb. 75
SHEA, J. VERNON: H. P. Lovecraft: The House and The Shadows ..... May 82
SHEPLEY, JOHN: Three For Carnival ..... May 32
SLESAR, HENRY: I Remember Oblivion ..... Mar. 36
ST. CLAIR, MARGARET: Beaulieu Jan. 34
THOMAS, GILBERT: The Face Is Familiar ..... Apr. 64
THOMAS, THEODORE L.: Smog .. Jan. 64
Desynchronosis ..... Feb. 73
Injected Memory ..... Apr. 62
Beamed Power ..... May 70
Migratory Locust ..... June 63
TOMERLIN, JOHN: White Night . Mar. 75
VANCE, JACK: The Mountains of Magnatz (novelet) ..... Feb. 102
The Sorcerer Pharesm (novelet) ..... Apr. 79
The Pilgrims (novelet) ..... June 96
WILSON, GAHAN: Cartoon ..... Jan. - June
WINKLER, RICHARD: An Afternoon in May ..... Feb. 48
YOUNG, ROBERT F.: L'Arc De Jeanne (novelet) ..... Jan. 5
ZELAZNY, ROGER: This Moment of the Storm ..... June 4

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED


P.S.
a lively look at your past and promise
june 1966/sixty cents
The Audience Is Dead / by William Redfield
The Guys In The Trick Suits / by William F. Nolan
Tear Off A Box Top / by Ron Goulart
also: William Tenn / Gerald Carson / Nicholas Breckenridge
AND NOW

WHAT DO CAMPUS REBELS AND SUB-MARINER AND BATTLE CREEK, MICHIGAN HAVE IN COMMON?

For one thing, they are all being considered in the current issue of P.S. William Tenn is writing about the student rebel — from a fresh point of view. How do the campus rebels of the 60's stack up against those of the 30's? You'll find out in Tenn's "The Student Rebel: Then and Now." Ron Goulart is writing about Battle Creek, Michigan, Tom Mix Whistling Rings, and other exotic places and premiums. Who were the Ralston Straight Shooters? You'll find out in Goulart's "Tear Off A Box Top." William F. Nolan is writing about Sub-Mariner and Superman and Wonder Woman and that whole crowd. Who was Captain America's sidekick? You'll find out in Nolan's "The Guys in the Trick Suits." Plus, articles on the college prankster, the decline of the Broadway **audience,** the odd evolution of the most inconsequential and frequently-read page of your newspaper — the society page, and much more. P.S. is a magazine which will carry you as far as your memories, or your curiosity want to take you. On sale now at most newsstands, 60¢; or, $3.00 for six issues by subscription.

MERCURY PRESS, INC. • **347 East 53 Street, New York, N. Y. 10022**

LICENSED TO UNSIGHT
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED